THE PATENT LEATHER KID

RUPERT HUGHES

THE PATENT LEATHER KID
AND SEVERAL OTHERS

25

A First National Picture. *The Patent Leather Kid.*

"WHAT'S A SET-UP, KID?" FAY ASKED INNOCENTLY.

THE PATENT LEATHER KID

AND SEVERAL OTHERS

BY

RUPERT HUGHES

ILLUSTRATED WITH SCENES
FROM THE
FIRST NATIONAL PICTURE
STARRING RICHARD BARTHELMESS

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Seldom has a gigantic motion picture been conceived under more auspicious circumstances than those that marked the inception of "The Patent Leather Kid." At its very first reading this Rupert Hughes story was hailed as a masterpiece for visualization.

Simultaneously the name of Richard Barthelmess came to those responsible for the production as the ideal actor for the part of Curly Boyle; and this was responsible for about the only change made in the transferal of the story from print to screen. Owing to the prominence of Barthelmess as a star and actor the title rôle was changed from the female character (as portrayed in the story) to the more picturesque male lead in the picture.

The filming of the war scenes—a stupendous undertaking—was done at Camp Lewis, Washington, with the aid of the War Department and the technical advice of the officers and assistance of the regulars at the camp.

So much was involved in the shooting of these scenes that Richard A. Rowland, General Manager of First National Pictures, personally made several trips to this out of the way location to assist Al Rockett, Production Manager, and Director Alfred Santell in their work of supervision.

And Molly O'Day, the young girl who was picked from 2,000 applicants for the part of the Golden Dancer, has been "made" in the film world, as the result of this part.

Sidelights on the taking of this war sequence furnish many illuminating items.

Three thousand U.S. regulars, 600 civilians as German soldiers and five million dollars' worth of U.S. army guns, tanks and equipment were used in the war scenes alone.

Cameras perched 60 feet in the air covered the "war area" of several acres which were shot by a staff of 12 cameramen. The wiring connecting planted mines for the explosions measured 175,000 feet. At one time the cameras shot a procession leading up to the battlefield five miles long.

At such times the area had to be roped off to prevent intrusions by well-meaning visitors or motorists who were touring the country

without any idea of what was transpiring.

A little red schoolhouse was erected for the education of film children, brought on location, in compliance with the laws providing for the four hours of school for them every day they worked in the films.

Fifty tanks "charged" in the grand advance over German trenches and shell-torn territory. Artillery barrages, airplane attacks, the destruction of a church and the Salvation Army Hut—all memories of the real war—figured in the realism of the reel war.

Col. Robert Alexander, in command of Camp Lewis, co-operated. He and his staff advised constantly on technical points.

A tabulation of the actual field equipment used in the picture included:

Twenty-four 3-inch mortars, thirteen 155 field guns, twenty-three 8-inch howitzers, fifteen 1 pounders, sixteen 75 field guns, 160 trucks, 50 ambulances, 600 horses, 150 wagons, six German field pieces, 11 German machine guns and three Austrian machine guns and hand grenades, machine guns, field kitchens, complete engineering equipment, motorcycles and field communication sets.

In contrast to this heavy, unwieldy equip-

ment which was obtained without difficulty through the co-operation of the Camp Lewis officers, it is interesting to note that the greatest difficulty the company experienced consisted in getting one of the draft cards issued when conscription became a law. Owing to the fact that the card is used for a close up, an actual reproduction had to be obtained and a long search ensued before anyone could be found retaining possession of this wartime summons.

W. F. E.

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The Patent Leather Kid

They called her that for reasons as evident to the naked eye as she was.

An inventory of her would have run as follows, starting at the top: an impudent patent leather cap; a frenzy of curls; a pitifully exquisite, pitilessly derisive, recklessly painted face; a child's throat; a slender-shouldered white torso submerged just in time (sometimes a little too late) in a bodice of patent leather, strapped over the shoulders, wrinkling about a boyish waist hardly slighter than the limber hips hidden by a flare of patent leather skirt; the mere beginning of a pair of trunks; a long hiatus of all costume; a pair of patent leather slippers.

The hiatus was filled by two of the nimblest imaginable legs, their knees of tremulous cream curdling and dimpling at joints so finely modeled that the beholder thought less of girl than of silken machinery or pliant jewelry.

The Kid danced wildly well in a shady cabaret where her only protection from herself or

her company was the understanding that she was the special sweetie of the up-and-coming young prize-fighter "Curly" Boyle, known in the perverse accent of certain native New Yorkers as "Coily Berl."

The Patent Leather Kid's name—if you believed what she told you (which was always inadvisable)—was Fay Poplin. Where she got it no one knew, but it was surely never from her mother or father—if she had ever had either. Still, it was the only one she used, and you could take your change out of it.

She had a wildcat inside the lithe, impossibly white body inside the glossy, flexile armor of patent leather impossibly black for all its flashing light. And there was a world of ugly wisdom back of the eyes that were, one minute, impossibly innocent; the next, intolerably wise.

Usually as restless as spilled mercury, Fay tonight might have been a statuette of marble and onyx, as she leered across the table at Curly Boyle where he was attacking a beefsteak, and recounting the fight he had just won.

Fresh from the throb and peril of the ring he described each lead, block, jab, with the fire, if not the vocabulary, of a poet. But Fay took it all with a bitter-sweet smile of contemptuous

amusement. Now and then she would toss him a celery-top, in lieu of an ironical flower, or a sprig of parsley from the platter he was cleaning up. At last she broke right in on the climax of the knock-out punch:

"Boy, you sure are the gravy! There's no denying it, for you admit it yourself; and you ought to know. But how come the newspapers keep saying your fights are all fixed and you only knock out set-ups?"

"Ah, who cares what the doity sheets say!"

In her face there was the meekness of a little girl lisping a prayer, but a she-devil's malice in her drawl as she asked: "Say, Coily, just what is a set-up?"

He was good only at fist-repartee.

He countered feebly: "Ah, go chase yourself! You know dam' well what a set-up is."

"Do I, dolling? A guy was tellin' me that set-ups are has-beens or never-wases who get paid to stand up just long enough to be knocked out. But Coily Berl would never beat up a poor gink who was hired to lay down, would you, dear-ree?"

Curly rolled his eyes in helpless agony toward his manager, Jake Stuke, and Jake growled at Fay: "Ah, lay off him, can't you?

Or I might pass you a poke in the jah myself!"

"Yes? And what'd mama be doin' in the meanwhile, pet? Wrappin' this chiny platter round your bald old bean, maybe. Say, what right you got to take a mortgage on a nice boy's life and toin him into a crook? Coily used to could lick all comers, but now he wouldn't dast bawl out that little Wop waiter without you looked him over, signed him up to lay down, and took the long end of the gate."

Jake almost wept as he pleaded: "Say! say! say! soft pedal that stuff, can't ya? Don't I know what Coily's got? Ain't I noissin' him for the champi'nship of the woild? Ain't I got him a clean record of eighteen knock-outs, se'm decisions and not one draw?"

Fay murmured with adorable wonder: "Oh, it was you that did all that knockin'-out, Jakie? It wasn't Coily, after all."

"Shut your trap, will ya?" Curly snarled. "Or do you want me to shut it for you?"

"Anything from you, sweethot, is a gift from hev'm."

Stuke stopped Curly's fist on its way over the table, and tried to silence this Patent Leather gnat:

"Ah, wait ta minut, wait ta minut. Wha'd'

you say, Kid, if I'd 'a' matched Coily up wit' some old vet'ran twicet his weight wit' twicet his ring-gener'lship, and he'd 'a' knocked Coily cold in the foist round of his foist fight? How about t'at, eh? How about it? If I'd 'a' did your way, he couldn't get into a p'liminary at the Y. W. C. A. Prize-fightin's a sci'nce; you can't loin a fella to be a champ in one lesson any more'n you can loin him to play the violin in one lesson. You're some dancer and I never seen nobody could shimmy like you can, unless it was a horse in fly-time. But you didn't loin that in one night, did ya? What if some of the sport writers do say Coily fights fixed fights? Look what they done to Lincoln! They shot him, didn' 'ey? And who was it got crucified? Or had you heard about 'at?"

There was a miserable wisdom in this; though, of course, Fay could never admit that Jake was right about anything; so she cooed: "Excuse me for livin', dearie. In my childish ignor'nce I thought a fighter was a guy who fought another fighter. I see it's somethin' like shadow-boxin'."

"Ah, say, what the——"

But she had heard her cue and was out on the floor doing her stuff while the saxophonists gar-

gled and snored. The light darted about the patent leather surfaces of her costume, and dreamed upon her snowy flesh, while her ruthless little frame telegraphed messages of an insolence and audacity that could never be said or sung.

Curly glared at her with a passionate hatred. For everybody else he had a heart full of ice-water. The only patriotism he had was his mad longing to be the champion of the United States and to beat down all foreigners. And everybody was a foreigner to Curly—a man from the Bronx or from Flatbush no less than an invader from remote New Jersey, Australia, Ireland, or any other point west.

Then even such patriotism as he had was destroyed by the World War when it broke up Europe and fascinated America. For it hurt the prestige of all pugilists and shut off their future glories. In the public mind a combat with a single adversary on a roped platform presided over by a referee to enforce the rules, was contrasted with the exploits of martyrs in cloud-wrapped airships or ooze-invading submarines or in corpse-lined trenches, with the slaughter of tormented myriads, the crumbling death of cities and villages and the increasing

woe of nations. The war was like a battle royal with the fighters blindfolded and nothing barred. If there was a Referee he never intervened.

When at last, with the rush of an uncontrollable mob, America joined the riot, Curly Boyle felt that his country had turned traitor. There was nothing but talk of volunteers, guns, ammunition, bayonet practice. The sacred word "fight" was diverted to the base uses of war. In the throngs about the prize-ring, uniforms were less conspicuous than ordinary clothes.

In the cabaret the uniforms made a wild uproar over Fay, and Curly could tell that their applause pleased her as she had never been pleased before. She looked as if she wanted to cry. Tonight when she came back panting and sank down at the table, she had forgotten her sarcasm. She said:

"Coily, I bet you'd look grand in khaki or a navy-blue low-neck. You're a hot dresser, but there's a soitain sumpin' about a uniform——"

"Yeah!" said Curley. "I been thinkin' about it. But I can't make up me mind which soivice to jern up with."

Jake Stuke raised a hand.

"Accordin' to our little contrack, Mr. Berl, if any mind-makin'-up is to be did, I do it. I do

the brain woik and you do the fist woik; and right where I book you. Suppose you enlisted like a fool; what'd they do to you? Set you to peelin' a million potatoes! Suppose you cut your t'umb off or get camp-sickness, or break your back; where are you? Supposin' you got into the trenches and come home wit' a crutch under each arm, if you had any arm to put a crutch under. They'd wave a few flags over you, and call you a coupla heroes, and then forget you. You'd be a lousy bum panhandlin' for poke-outs. No, sir, you stick to the woik I've laid out for you, and leave the shootin' to the guys that's afraid to use their fists."

Curly nodded. "I guess you're right at that."

Jake grew magnificent: "Why, if they was any danger—like a ninvasion or somethin', I'd shoulder a rifle meself. But half o' these volunteers that's rushin' to the tailors to get into uniforms is simply stuck on their shapes. This patertism stuff is the bunk. It's like what Fay says: the uniform is becomin' and that's all there is to it."

"I guess you got the right dope at that," said Curly.

Was it a sigh of relief or of regret that slipped from Fay's lips? The veil of almost

tenderness in her eyes was gone, leaving them hard and bitter again. They softened only as she glanced about at the eager lads in khaki or blue blouses.

Curly knew those eyes of hers and jealousy choked him. All soldiers, sailors and marines were immediately added to his gallery of enemies. Gradually the public went plumb nutty, and began to call for the draft, compulsory service, a something they called universal conscription. If the act passed, everybody would have to volunteer whether he wanted to or not. Even Stuke was worried.

Curly wasn't afraid of nobody, but a guy hadda right to stick to his own speciality.

Fay, though could not seem to get his idea into her solid ivory noodle. She was growing so warlike that she would rather dance with a soldier or a sailor than listen to Curly talk ring stuff. There was a funny look on her face all the time. Curly tried to knock it off once or twice, but it kept coming back. Especially when the band played "The Star-Spangled Banner." And somebody was always playing it. Go to a theater or a movie or a restaurant and you hadda keep standing up half the time. You couldn't begin to chaw a potata but what

the band would begin to bump the bumps with that old "O-oh say, can you see by the dawn's oily light——" On the street you was forever tipping your hat to the flag as if it was a lady friend. Curly added the flag to his other favorite hates.

One afternoon when he was strolling along Fit' Avenya with Fay, for a little light exercise before the bout of the night with the Jersey Skeeter—the biggest man he had taken on yet —they were checked at a crossing by a regiment moving up the street. There was always a regiment moving up the street.

The mob at the curb trod on Curly's toes with no thought of who it was they were shoving. When he was pushed out into the street by a gang of lunkheads behind, two big stiffs of cops put their hands on his chest and used him for a battering-ram. And one of the cops sang out:

"Hello, Curly, where's your uniform?"

"Where's yours, you big bum?" was the best Curly could think of. Then he leaned out and looked down the line of the pop-eyed populace, and saw the hats spilling off as if a wave were breaking along the curb.

Another flag was coming along! A flag was always coming along! Curly eyed the leaning

standards slanting north as the Stars and Stripes beat backward in a writhe of red and white and a twinkle of stars in a restless blue. He hated them so that he kept his hands at his sides and his hat on his head.

The bareheaded idiots around him stared at him in wrath. People muttered:

"Hats off!"

"The lid! The lid!"

Curly did not move. A stunted runt next to him had the nerve to say:

"Take it off before I smash it over your ugly mug!"

Curly's answer was a contemptuous elbow-jab that took the guy's wind and doubled him up. An old man, grizzled and tall, whispered over Curly's shoulder:

"Uncover, man; the flag is coming."

"Ah, to hell wit' the rag!" said Curly.

There was a movement in the crowd as if a snake were coiling to strike, and Curly made ready to learn these dubs who they were talking to. Suddenly his hat was whisked off by some unknown hand. Curly whirled and searched for it, but could not find it. Fay, who was standing at his side, had evidently not noticed the atrocity, for she was staring at the soldiers.

Just then the troops were checked by some jam ahead; and people waiting to cross the street made a dash to pass between the platoons marking time. Fay caught Curly's arm and urged him forward. He was swept across, looking frantically for his hat among the hurrying feet.

There are few things as sacred to a man as his hat and Curly was in a mood to assault the whole town when Fay said: "Here's your bonnet, dearie." She glanced at his fist. "Don't waste that mallet on me, boy; save it for the Skeeter."

Curly snatched the hat from her hand, jammed it on his head and struck out for his training-quarters, leaving her flat. When he turned to see if she were following, she was gazing at the soldiers, whose bayonets flowed beyond the heads of the witnesses in a long saw-blade of steel.

All this put Curly in high spirit for the bout. The Jersey Skeeter had more height and weight and a three-inch longer reach than Curly, but only courage enough to submit for a few dollars to the brief death of a knock-out. It had been agreed that the fight was to go four rounds before the Skeeter took the count; but

Curly was so furious that he forgot his instructions, and went right after the Skeeter with that low menacing prowl of his, brushed aside the Skeeter's hands with his open left glove and drove his right to the chin with a zing that rocked the Skeeter's head almost to sleep, and woke the crowd to frenzy.

The Skeeter fell into a clinch and mumbled: "Hey, whatta hell? Easy on dat stuff."

Curly flung him off and almost dropped him with a blow to the heart. The Skeeter went into another clinch and Curly smote him over the kidneys so hard that he straightened with a yowl, only to be doubled up with a jab in the pit of the stomach.

Curly soon had the Skeeter so cock-eyed that only the bell saved him. Stuke and Molasses whispered to Curly to slow up and ease along till the fourth round or he'd have a dead man on the canvas.

The second was so stupid that the crowd grew rabid as the two men fanned the air, fell into clinches until the referee pried them apart; whiffed, danced and embraced. The referee did all the work and the crowd howled.

"Say, whyn't you kiss each other?"

"Give the poor beezer an ice-cream cone, sweetheart."

"Nah, make it a cream-puff apiece."

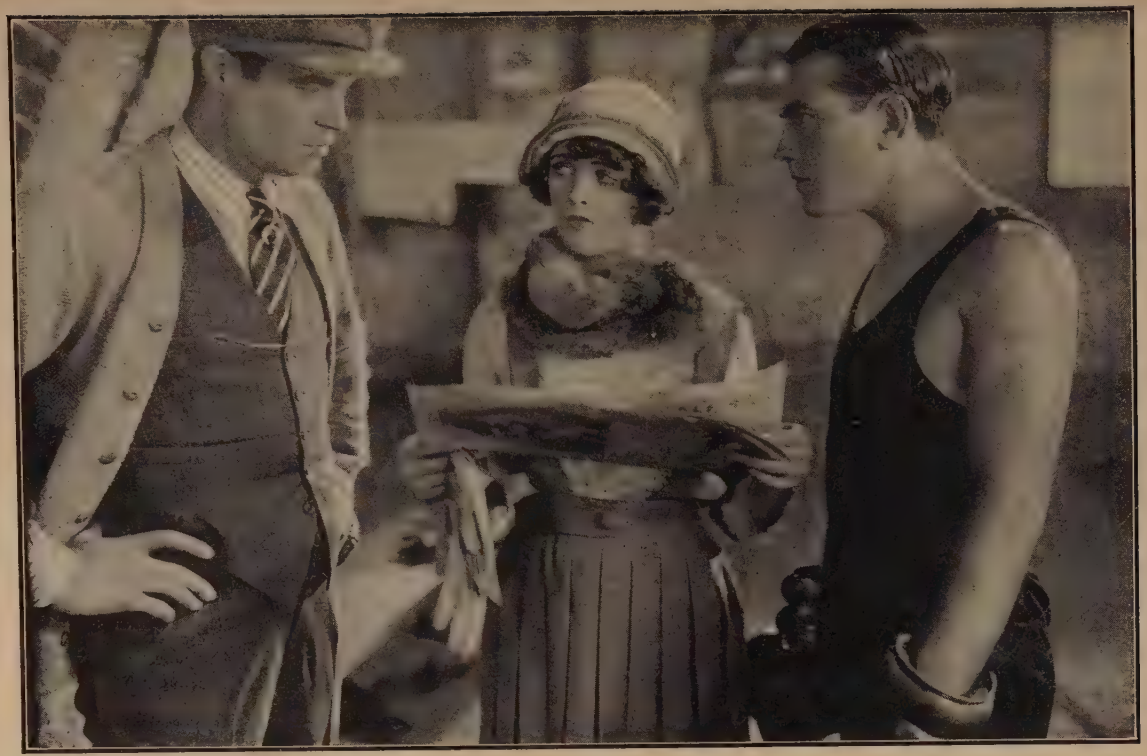
Curly could not endure ridicule and he sent the Skeeter cowering against the ropes, trying to cover himself in a dozen places with only two useless fists. The magnificence of Curly's shoulder-blades rippling and glistening in the downward flare of light, and the pure mechanical beauty of his jabs and uppercuts, filled the stodgiest spectator with a sense of beautiful efficiency. The many-voiced had one voice.

"Put him out!"

Curly glanced inquiringly at Stuke and Stuke, afraid of the crowd, nodded and called through the ropes, "Give him all you got, boy!"

With his left hand, Curly set the head of the Skeeter in just the position to knock it off, drew back that right meat-ax of his, and—a regiment marched by! The band played "The Star-Spangled Banner." There was a racket of people getting to their feet; then a hush of attention.

Curly paused to think up a proper curse. The Skeeter, glancing between his gloves, saw that Curly's jaw had sagged and his hands had



A First National Picture. *The Patent Leather Kid.*

"LAY OFF HIM OR I MIGHT PASS A POKE MYSELF," JAKE GROWLED.

dropped. The much abused Skeeter could not resist the chance. Curly was sitting too pretty.

The Skeeter made a sledge-hammer of himself and caught Curly just below the inverted V of his ribs. As Curly crumpled the Skeeter's right hand came up from the floor, met the point of Curly's jaw, slammed it shut and jarred off every nerve in his head.

Flop went Curly, knocked out twice at once. Before his soul could get back into his body the sexton's fatal forefinger was beating the death-knell over him, and chanting "Six! Seven! Eight!"

By the cry of "Nine!" Curly had forced one paralyzed arm to action and heaved his two-ton weight up to his left elbow. At "Ten and out!" he had his right palm on the canvas and was prying his other shoulder out of the ground where it had taken root. His head came up as if it were made of lead and his eyes were pitiful with fog and wonder.

He could hear faint sounds of cheering several miles away and the next thing he knew was his dressing-room, with his black sparring partner and his fat adorer, Puffy Kinch, working over him; and Stuke trying to look like a good loser.

Curly tore off his gloves and sobbed and wailed as only prize-fighters can weep. His three disconsolate retainers tried in vain to console him. Stuke was kind enough to say: "Now that you know how it feels to be knocked out, you'll be all the better for it."

But the Skeeter gave him the only comfort he could accept. The Skeeter put his head in to apologize and Curly, with a howl of joy, dragged him in, beat him senseless, and kicked him out. Then he wept again. He outwept his own shower-bath.

He would not have gone to the cabaret where the Patent Leather Kid always waited for the good news, but he hardly dared let anyone else tell her how it came about. When he arrived she was dancing with a tipsy young lieutenant, who hugged her so tight that the two ensigns who dogged their steps could not cut in.

Fay danced the uniform toward Curly and hailed him. "Hay, Coily, how many rounds did he last before you handed him his K. O.?"

"Ah, to hell wit choo!" snapped Curly.

"Oh, I say," said the lieutenant, "I can't have that, you know."

"Then you can have that!" said Curly, and pasted him one that sent him into the orches-

tra, where the saxophones emitted a dying squawk. The ensigns fell on Curly, and he said: "Split that between yous!" as he handed them a left and a right, zing-zing!

Fay caught his arm. He gave her a backhander that slammed her across a table into a wall. It took two waiters to relieve her of the sharp knife she seized with a sincere promise to lose it in Curly's black heart.

As all the soldiers, sailors and marines massed to avenge the uniform, Stuke and Puffy Kinch dragged Curly away.

The next morning as his bitter eyes ransacked the newspapers he found little but military and naval mention, and only one scant reference to himself:

> Something must have gone wrong with Jake Stuke's Curly Boyle last night. He was completely upset by his own set-up. The pitiful Jersey Skeeter stopped the pitiful four-flusher in the second. If Mr. Boyle still believes that he is a fighter, let him take himself to France, where all the important American fighting will be done until further notice. Since he has never been tempted to volunteer, it is to be hoped that the draft act will catch him.

It did.

Stuke bribed a physician to certify that he

had a weak heart on the same day that a more patriotic citizen bribed the same physician to certify that his weak heart was sound. The patriotic citizen had the pleasure and honor of dying of heart-disease during a great battle, and Stuke had the pleasure of holding down a swivel-chair on a draft board.

Puffy Kinch made a noble effort to evade the sleuth-hounds of the draft, but when he took his final refuge under a bed, he was so fat that his amused pursuers stood a while and watched the mattress breathe.

Stuke arranged to have Curly assigned to the important post of physical instructor to the Boy Scouts, but when he told Fay of his good luck, her laugh of cold scorn dazed him. He gasped: "Say, sa-ay, what's bitin' you that you got such a itch to get me moidered by the Joimans? The Kaiser never done me no doit."

She stared at him, shook her head feebly, broke down crying and ran away.

She sent him a note.

> Curly dearie: I couldent fight, I couldent be a train nurse, I couldent be a stenogopher but when I toled them I could dance they says go on over to france and dance for the boys so I am on my way. Dont

worry I am taking your place so take good care of your precious self so no more at present from if I don't see you any more hello FAY

Curly crushed the note in his fist, and consigned Fay to his overcrowded private hell. Then he went to the draft board and asked be shipped to France—not to spite the Kaiser, but the Patent Leather Kid.

In the training camp he met Puffy Kinch, who was in the same brigade and served as a splendid press-agent. Curly was soon the champion boxer of the whole division. But on the transport he was not so good. His stout stomach had been his mainstay and it betrayed him—incessantly. He was already licked to a standstill when he reached France.

At sight of the first wounded men, his courage took another K. O. Every man has his pet cowardice and a bullet was Curly's. He confessed to Puffy: "Them human remnants have got my goat. I can't get 'em out of my system. I'm all in already. I didn't know they was as much yella in all the woild as I got right now."

Puffy suffered for him and with him, but their terror was like their seasickness: the ship

had not stopped on account of Curly's nausea; the army marched him on for all his reluctance. It marched him straight to Fay Poplin.

This was not so strange since she had begged to be sent to the billet where the New York draft troops would be sent. All the while he was in the training camp, she had been dancing in Paris with everybody that asked her to—soldiers on leave, soldiers on the way up, soldiers stationed there for administration work.

But her longing was for the trenches. She had always had the adventurous heart and she wanted to do her bit for the boys who were about to die, or who had returned from the dugouts for a respite before they went back into the mud.

When she learned where the draft regiment was stationed, she exerted a little unfair influence on one of her countless suitors and had herself forwarded to the Y. M. C. A. hut. There on the same ballroom floor with her were an English duchess, two French comtesses, and various American aristocrats who wore themselves out in the arms of shagbark soldiers of every sort, many of them all too fresh from the de-lousing machines; many of them apparently delayed on their way thither. But everything

hideous, ridiculous, incredible, inconceivable was sanctified if it helped to cheer the soldiers. No sacrifice was too great for the great god Morale.

Here was a girl of Fay Poplin's type dancing under the auspices of the Y. M. C. A.! The Y itself had dazed itself by embarking in the tobacco business and giving out cigarettes in place of tracts. Then it had turned its chapels into public dance-halls and substituted jazz for hymns. Day and night the sacred priestesses spun about the spinning soldiers. They rested only on Sundays.

Then they saw that when the lonely soldiers found the ballroom closed on Sundays, they simply drifted "down the line." And so the Y. M. C. A., as the lesser of two evils, gave dances on the Sabbath!

The footsore Duchess exclaimed: "If the war lasts much longer, the Lord only knows what they'll make of us!"

Fay was afraid of nothing but her feet. Her poor "dogs" swollen, bruised from the tread of many a hobnailed boot, threatened to die on her. Hundreds of soldiers twirled and pursued her over thousands of miles of distance and it seemed that everybody in the divi-

sion took her into his arms except Curly Boyle.

She could not be sure that he was with the army, but she always hoped and was forever asking. "Do you happen to know a boy named Coily Berl?"

Even those who knew Curly Boyle did not know his name in that dialect. Lieutenant Hugo Breen, who was in command of him, failed to recognize the name when Fay asked him her old question. But he recognized that Fay was the most delicious armful he had ever dandled and he came every evening to tote her round the floor.

He found her so peaked and jaded one Sabbath night that his pity grew dangerously tender. "It's a crime to keep you on your feet. Come out in the moonlight and rest."

She shook her head and glanced along the line of homesick, dance-hungry, girl-famished soldiers edging the floor.

"Look at the poor boys that may never dance again! They're goin' out to die, maybe, and I got a right to die for 'em. I got an ambish too. I'm keepin' track of my distance and it won't be long now till I've danced my twenty-fi' thousandth mile. Then I'm goin' to call it a day."

So she danced on and on until she actually fell asleep in Hugo's arms.

If she dreamed of Curly, she never dreamed that he was watching her now. He and Puffy had steered clear of everything bearing so respectable a label as the Y. M. C. A. and had studied French among the living dictionaries in the native quarters.

But on this quiet Sunday they had been attracted by two pretty things of evident American stock. The girls had such a come-along look in their eyes that Curly and Puffy followed them and overtook them at the hut, where the two scouts flung back their capes and revealed their uniforms. Having decoyed Curly and Puffy into this safe environment, they invited the lads to dance.

"Nobody can't sting me twice in the same place," said Curly. "I bet yous goils can't dance for sour apples."

The benevolent sirens found other soldiers more willing and Curly and Puffy lingered in the outer darkness watching the merry-go-round. Suddenly Curly gripped Puffy with a vigor that had him yowling, and gasped:

"Sweet cheese! Lookit!"

It was the Patent Leather Kid dancing with

some shavetail who kept his head so close to hers that Curly could not make him out as his own lieutenant. Nor could Curly understand that his own wrath was jealousy.

Just then Hugo Breen realized that Fay was actually slumbering in his arms, walking in her sleep. So he danced her into the blue air, brushing aside the envious witnesses. He had her almost out of ear-shot of the music before she woke, as startled as if she had fallen out of bed. When she realized where she was she gasped:

"I gotta get back! I gotta get back!"

Breen kept his arms about her and told her how adorable she was, and how pitiful. He begged her for a kiss. So many men had taken her kisses with or without the asking that she laughed drowsily and put up her pretty mouth.

Before the enchanted Hugo could accept the gift, a big hand was thrust between his lips and Fay's, and he received instead of a kiss a slap in the face that swept him back and tore his hands from Fay.

She opened her eyes. Curly! Her first thought was one of delight that he was in uniform and in France—but not for long, it seemed, since Hugo had already whipped out

his pistol. He would have emptied it into Curly, too, if Fay had not seized his hand and spread her fingers over the muzzle.

Puffy almost swooned when he saw that Curly had struck his own lieutenant in the face, but Curly was too blind to care. Puffy held his terrific left arm and his more terrible right, while Hugo checked his own fury for Fay's sake, put up his pistol and mumbled:

"Boyle, I could shoot you for this, or have you shot. But I'll let you live in the hope that you'll stop some German bullet that might have killed a decent man."

Curly sneered at such magnanimity and took it for cowardice. Then he turned on Fay and reviled her with such names that a squad of her admirers fell on Curly, and Hugo had to save him from being beaten to death.

The next morning Curly woke up battered and defiant, calling himself a sucker, a set-up, a plain fall-guy for this war-stuff. But he could not buck his corporal, his sergeants and his officers; and Hugo ran him raw for his own good and the good of the service, while Curly's hatred smoldered and ate deeper into his soul.

Of evenings he hung infatuated outside the hut, watching Fay flit from soldier's arms to

soldier's arms, and fuming with wrath at Lieutenant Breen's proprietary way of holding her and murmuring to her.

Sometimes a woman has more reasons than one for snubbing a man, but when Fay first gave Curly the icy eye and the shoulder-blade after he had called her all those names, he could only imagine that she was sore at him for putting her where she belonged. So he made no effort to force a reconciliation.

He took his rage out on Breen, with a subtlety of insolence impossible not to recognize and impossible to specify. It was a hard position for both natures: Curly had to knuckle under to a man he could whip with one hand; Breen had to bear the mean looks of a subordinate.

Curly was a fierce individualist and punishments drove him to mutiny. Breen was a fanatic patriot and felt it his highest dignity to forget his dignity in the name of the service. After all, Curly Boyle was one more rifle, one more bayonet, one more stop-gap.

And Fay, who was on fire with patriotism, who admired Breen and both loved and loathed Curly, succeeded only in keeping them in a humor of mutual murder.

Curly grew so difficult that Breen rejoiced at an unexpected solution of the problem of what to do with him.

The regiment was joined by a platoon of tanks, Renault tanks just up from Langres, where American troops had studied the use of them as American troops had to study the use of all the French and British war material, since their own country had none of it ready.

These tanks were not the great baggage-cars of the English type that startled the Germans one day like a herd of elephants breaking from the jungle. The Renaults were called "rhinos," mere whippets. They weighed only a matter of seven tons apiece and carried only a chauffeur and a gunner, in addition to their engines, their gas and their ammunition.

The tanks fascinated the infantry. Puffy had to wedge into the first one he saw, and he filled it to overflowing. Breen called out:

"Sergeant, take that crowd out of there. Get a can-opener and squeeze him out before he swells up and busts."

The sergeant needed Curly's help to pull Puffy through the narrow door, and the sergeant sighed:

"Fat boy, you're just naturally too big for this little war."

Only the day before Puffy had got stuck in the elbow of a communication trench during the rehearsal of a battle and had caused the technical destruction of a whole platoon.

Curly doubled Puffy up with a playful jab and made to step into the tank to give it the once-over, but Breen drawled:

"Sergeant, keep Mr. Boyle out of there. He's so careless with his big fists that he might break something. But since he and Kinch are so fond of tanks, I've found at last the very job they're looking for. Assign them both to the squad of tank-nurses."

When he found out what this new dignity meant, Puffy had to explain it that night to the English duchess, who had found him the drollest of dancing-partners.

"Well, your Duchessship, whadda ya suppose I and Coily Berl have been p'moted to?"

"I can't imagine. Do tell me."

"We've been raised to tank-noisses."

"Tank-nusses? Fancy! And whatever might they be?"

"It's a great honor. We don't have to ride in the doity old busses, thank Gawd; the air

in them things is stuffy and the noise would bust your ears. All we gotta do is walk along outside and take care of 'em. They can't hardly see where they're goin' and they can't hear no signals, so us liaison men walk along and repeat the signals wit' a bang on the sides of the tank wit' the butt of the rifle. One bang means one t'ing and two bangs means anudder, and so on."

The duchess surprised Puffy by a view of the matter that his slow brain had never thought of.

"But I say! I should fancy it would be far more dangerous outside the tanks than in—if you know what I mean?"

"I know just what you mean, Duchess. I get you poifeck. But o' course—well, war's kind o' dangerous anywheres, I guess."

"Indeed yes! I guess also—quite!" said the duchess.

Curly had not been so thick as Puffy. His training had quickened his imagination and taught him to foresee and duck danger. His fame and his prowess as a pugilist made him unashamed of his cowardice as a soldier.

The moment Breen got rid of him by assigning him to "outdoor" duty, he saw just what

it would mean to dog one of these steel brutes under the storm of fire that would rattle off their thick hides.

His wrath grew blacker as his liver turned whiter. He solemnly resolved to escape from the ordeal if he had to win his discharge by shooting off one of his own fingers. He set the muzzle of his rifle against his left forefinger, but could not bring himself to pull the trigger.

He decided instead to lift his hand above the parapet of the first fighting trench he visited and let the enemy slice it for him.

He was so sick with a disease of cowardice that even Puffy began to bully him.

"In the first place, there ain't goin' to be no trenches for us tankers; in the seckin' place, for the love o' Mike, quit braggin' about how brave you ain't—or they'll give you a medal for it."

With the abruptness of a bomb from a Big Bertha, the order came for the division to advance into action. The tanks trundled right alongside the platoon commanded by Hugo Breen, who made it his business to keep an eye on Curly.

The blundering behemoths crept along the night-weird roads, through villages like ruined

A First National Picture. *The Patent Leather Kid.*

"AN' WHAT WOULD I BE DOING?" FAY ASKED.

graveyards, as if primeval times had come again and prehistoric reptiles crawled toward some Mesozoic encounter.

Curly had not spoken to Fay since he reviled her at their first meeting outside the hut, but Hugo Breen had bidden her many a good-by, his only comfort the thought that he left her far from the perils he embraced.

But the division had hardly crossed the horizon before the village was thrilled with the visit of a troupe of American players, actors and actresses from the legitimate, and vaudeville stars from the—illegitimate?

They brought Broadway to camp; but for one night only since they were on their way right into the danger zone. Fay implored them to take her along, told them lies about her fame as the Patent Leather Kid, and, when they were politely skeptical, insisted on proving her quality, pleading:

"I had a hunch to bring my woikin'-clothes along. Just lea' me duck into 'em and do my stuff once. See my act and then let your conscience be your guide."

She sped to her tent, took from her camp trunk the varnished costume, caressed it, ducked into it, ran back through the streets and

onto the stage they had improvised in a broken church.

There was no resisting her beauty, her tantalizing allure, and the overwhelming pathos of her feeling that dancing was her one expression, her sole oratory of a seething patriotism.

The manager had only one protest left: "You're too pretty, my dear, to be risked. One airplane raid and—well, your patent has expired. Stay here and jazz along with the boys in this billet."

"I'd rather a bomb hit me! I've figured it out that I've one-stepped as far as once around the globe. Ain't that enough for one pair of dogs? Gawd, but I'd like to dance alone for a while."

"All right. Come along and if a shell hits you—well, you've earned your rest."

The troupe moved on in racing cars and set up shop wherever there were troops to entertain, either before or after taking the stinking medicine of the trenches.

Curly's division drew up at length to the brink of the volcano under cover of night—at least they called it "night," though the pitch-black gloom was torn to shreds with rain like blood and fire in the rip and split and spatter

of star-shells and the shattering zoom of big ammunition feeling out the secret places.

The mud here was almost too much for the slithering tanks, but it was worse for the poor nurse, who must skip and leap and flounder in the fumes of gasoline and clamber through the branches of the trees the tanks bore down, and the barbed wire that whipped up in their wake.

In the mangled forest of their last resort, the tank crews set to work with frenzy to tune up their engines, their guns, their caterpillar tractors. But Curly had nothing to do except listen to the dog-weary Puffy's snores and nurse his grouch and his blue funk.

The dank woods reeked with fog and pockets of stale gas and were nauseous with the garbage of the human slaughter-pen. Hundreds of men had been chopped to mince-meat here and never buried and their ghosts whispered to Curly:

"It won't be long till you jern up with us."

When the fatal moment came to advance, Curly's morale was at the absolute zero. His tank moved off and left him, and he thought of the lumbering, yawning Puffy as a fool hound heeling a car of death.

He could not budge until the nose of the fol-

lowing tank bunted him over. Only a swift wriggle saved him from being ironed into a flat pulp by the caterpillar rollers. He lay panting a moment to watch them pouring in a hideous cascade that ran to the rear, climbed again and came back endlessly. But as the last of the beasts of steel deployed into line, he ran after his own because it was the sole familiar thing in the insanity about him.

The dawn was seeping through the fog when the Renaults nosed out of the thicket into the open and Curly saw darkly before him his first battle-field. It was not only before him but behind him; above, where the planes whirred and whence the wasted shrapnel rattled from the anti-aircraft cannon; beneath, where the shells dived and came back in geysers of steel splinters mingled with bones and flesh and mud —and noise!—eternal, maddening noise that never ended and made death all but desirable.

The earth was like a picture of the moon, pitted and poxed, slimy and foul, gashed with trenches, with barbed-wire everywhere. The only soldiers visible were the sprawled corpses and the lines of helmeted heads set like rows of skulls behind the parapets.

The wonder was that anybody lived, that

anybody dared advance. Curly stared ahead and turned to run. Behind him a squad of his own platoon was advancing ahead of the infantry support. Something fell from the sky. There was a black oil tank on fire there; then nothing; then a hole; and no more soldiers. "I can't toin back!" He shifted to the right, where a line of men was coming up over the top. Machine guns caught their range and they went back like hollyhocks flopping across a scythe. "Nothin' doin' over there!" He shifted to the left.

For the sake of surprise the long preliminary bombardment had been omitted so that the enemy could not be warned to concentrate reserves, but now the American barrage was coming along ahead of the infantry, pelting the earth with hailstones that walked and rent the earth. "The left is woist of all."

The only shelter Curly found was his own tank, donkeying along as pretty as a steel-riveted coffin blown out of a tomb and sent sliding and bumping across the ground. A whole row of giants' coffins was bobbing and dipping in a ludicrous row and the invisible Germans were giving them all they had. Their biggest shells thumped and thundered, van-

ished, towered back in smoke, always missed but always promised death the next time.

When the tanks got up to the range of the machine guns, a level rain of bullets beat upon the steel and rained backward with the blood-curdling scream and whir of ricochet. Now Curly had only to put out his hand and pluck that wound he had prayed for. But he hugged his rifle like a drowning man and cowered under his all-too-little helmet singing with the dust of steel. Inside the tank, safe and snug, sat the driver and the gunner, stripped to the waist and watching the fun through a slit, not troubling even to reply to the shot that peppered the thick rind of their crawling fort.

The tanks were unbelievably serene in their ugly progress, unhurried, irresistible, imperturbable, invulnerable, waddling with ponderous deliberation.

They were vast iron idiots obliterating everything they met. Ahead of them was a narrow trench with a line of Heinies pop-eyed, too paralyzed to fire. The monsters slid up to them snapped off the barbed wire and the posts and smeared the trench, the soldiers and their weapons into one grisly paste.

Curly had to follow, realizing what was un-

derfoot. He would have vomited if there had not come a blast of fire from the flank. He and Puffy ducked to the other side of the tank.

The gunner must have heard the drum of the bullets on the side, for the old duck whirled and swam to the right where a machine gun pill-box was hidden in a clump of ragged trees. The Renault bunted the trees over upon the nest, crushed the concrete emplacement into dust, smothered the little garrison in its own fortress and sealed it smooth.

Then it swung north again, jouncing and nodding toward a trench whose tenants had witnessed the rubbing out of their compatriots. They had just strength enough to clamber out, hold up their shivering hands and stutter, *"K-K-Kame-Kamerad-d-d!"*

The tank stopped short. The two passengers came out for air, sweating and naked as stokers. Breen and a batch of infantry swarmed up. Breen ordered the Germans to drop their weapons and take off their belts. A sergeant went among them and with a trench knife slashed their suspenders so that they must use their hands to hold their breeches up —which they would do from no sense of decency, but because they could not run or walk

or fight with their breeches about their knees.

If Breen had had a decent streak in him, he would have sent Curly back with the prisoners. But he chose another man, who was fool enough to protest.

While they paused, a big shell made a crater so close to Curly's feet that he rolled down into it. He decided to play dead and stay put. But the lousy Breen looked down and called:

"Snap out of that, Mr. Boyle! I'm just as scared as you are, but I'm going forward with you. You've got a chance for life if you come along, but if you don't, I'll kill you myself."

Curly came to life and scrambled cravenly out of the well. Breen put up his pistol, the tank crew stepped into their limousine and closed the door. If Puffy had not knocked up the barrel of Curly's rifle, Breen's war record would have been ended with a cartridge from one of his own men.

The trench was so wide that the stern of the Renault sank in it and it could not pull out for all its snorting and plunging. The Germans got the range again and Curly must stand and shudder while the big shells thundered as if all the devils were shooting craps for him.

The advance was checked till one of the other

Renaults could be fetched back and a chain fastened and a maddening while spent in bucking and tugging till the whippet was on the level again, and able to proceed.

Curly died a score of times and could not believe that he still lived when the blast and the ruin of each shell had given way to the next.

The tanks lumbered on. They tilted up a hillock, coasted down, straddled a trench and filled it up, wiped down a dugout, waded a crimson rivulet.

Then Curly's tank began to wobble, to fall behind the line again. It stopped dead. Smoke poured from its crevices. The door flung wide and the crew swarmed out, grimy and scorched and singed. Inside, blazes fluttered.

The driver reached in to snatch out fire-extinguishers and squirt them on the flames while the enemy snipers began to snipe. From the trenches, fat-helmeted men in gray who had waited to surrender, swarmed out to capture.

Breen was on hand again. He shouted to Curly to mount the tank but before Curly could refuse, he turned to Puffy, took Puffy's big muddy boot in the palm of both hands and shot him to the hot roof.

Puffy was scared brave. He fired off all his cartridges and then reached down for hand-grenades and piled them at his feet. Then he stood up and hurled them here and there where they were most needed. There was something beautiful and joyous about him even in the eyes of Curly, who stood palsied, unable to decide where to fire or how to cover.

Puffy was too big to miss, too drunk with battle-hooch to care for a nick in the ribs, a bite out of his thigh. When his right arm cracked, he threw grenades with his left.

Curly saw two snipers kneeling and taking aim at Puffy. He wished he had the power to protect his friend. But he could not find his muscles.

Then Puffy came over as if a mule had kicked him off the roof. He fell at Curly's feet, splashed up bloody mud and took the count with his mouth open and his eyes rolled back white.

This was what Curly needed. His country, his flag, his honor, his duty meant nothing. But when the black-hearted blackguards got his friend, he understood. That put it all in words of one syllable. He saw a German dashing toward him with his bayonet low. Curly

touched the trigger and the Heinie went forward on his nose. Another gray-backed louse was on his heels. Curly fired and missed, but knocked the man's gun aside with his own and then with all the famous drive of his punching muscles, and as if the bayonet were the far end of his fist, he smote that Heinie in the pit of his belly. This too was something Curly could understand. This was what his muscles understood and loved.

Breen, who was lending a hand in the tank, backed right into a galloping German's bayonet. Curly caught the blade in his hand and dragged it toward his own chest, side-stepped it, shifted his gun into the hollow of his left arm and lifted the Heinie off his feet with an uppercut to the point of the jaw. And now Curly was so much himself again that he began to count the senseless Heinie out—"One, two, t'ree."

Amazed and admiring, Breen yelled, "Good work, Boyle. Much obliged!" He wrung Curly's bleeding left hand and apologized!

The crew leaped into the tank and slammed the door, and then the gun of the tank began to spit. The siege was over. The assailants fell over one another in flight. The tank whirled

this way and that, coughing and belching lead. It broke half a dozen German legs and cleared the neighborhood, then moved on with the disgusting wobble of an old gander late to dinner.

Curly hesitated by Puffy's side, weeping and cursing. But stretcher-bearers came up, darted to Puffy and carried him back. Curly tied a dirty handkerchief about his left hand and ran after his tank, strangely interested, drunkenly eager for more of this kind of stuff.

When the advance for the day ended at the appointed spot, the tanks found shelter in the lee of a high mound, and the stokers came out into the evening air to rest and consider their glory. Breen strode up, slapped Curly on the shoulder and said to everybody within reach of his voice:

"If it hadn't been for old man Boyle's boy, I wouldn't be here tonight. He saved my life."

Curly was still surly enough, and frank enough to mutter:

"I wonder why."

Breen tried to laugh that off, but there was regret in his laughter, and the other men stared at Curly as if he were a skunk from somewhere.

That night seemed no longer to Curly than

a period between rounds. It was as if his seconds worked over the groggy fighter in his sleep, for by morning his soul was washed and fanned with towels, given a wet sponge to drink from, and heartened for the gong.

When he was wakened a little before the Zero with a tap and a whisper, "Ten to go!" there leaped up a different Curly, ready for battle, eager for battle, keen to fight for—for what? He could not have told. It was not for the fun or the pride of fighting as in the ring, or for any championships or medal. He was fighting for a mystery.

This day's work involved the capture of an ex-village. There were stone walls and cellars and piles of tumbled masonry to overcome, with enemy soldiers as thick as cooties.

A church tower was the key position and just as Curly's tank reached it the steering-gear jammed. The whippet went round and round the building so fast that it all but flattened Curly, dancing to escape the stones and bullets from the upper windows. Suddenly the old bus decided to quit circling and dive. It catapulted into a doorway with such a leap that it brought down the whole shell-riddled tower upon itself.

A smoke of rubble-dust went up and when it settled, Curly could not even see the tank. He dropped his rifle and began to tear at the masonry. Other soldiers came to his aid and they flung aside blocks of granite and dead Germans with equal unconcern.

They cleared a space along the side of the tank till they reached the door, but a tottering pile of stone stood waiting here to come down in avalanche the moment the keystone was removed.

The rescuers stood baffled while the men in the tank pounded and suffocated. At last Curly climbed a tier or two, set his feet with care and took the weight upon his own great shoulder-blades. Bracing himself, like old Atlas in the almanac, he straddled the doorway of the tank and then with all his strength, and more, heaved upward and backward, wondering just when the stones would begin to roll and crack his fool neck.

But what did his neck matter before the danger to the sacred tank?

Somehow he held, shivering and dripping with sweat from the strain, while his comrades pulled out the last block. The tank door swung back, and the all but strangled crew fell out.

They looked up to see that they passed between the legs of Curly Boyle.

The next job was to extract Curly. But how were they to do that? He was himself the keystone of the arch, and all above him was piled white stone trembling to spill at his least quaver.

While the men gaped and planned how they could shore him up till they could get him out, Curly watched in a failing agony but with a certain grandeur in his eyes. He groaned:

"Watch out below, yous guys, or some of yous'll get hoit."

Then he wilted, caved, came down like a crucifix. And all the wall came with him. There was nothing in front of them but a cairn of stone, and Curly buried alive within.

Breen and his men went at it with frenzy, their eyes drenched, their language foul, their hands gashed and scarlet. They found his head, at last, face down, bleeding, lifeless. When they had dug the rest of him out, he came back to life, but liked it so little that he went right back into the dark again.

There was an awful limpness about him when they laid him on the ground at a distance from the church. His back was broken and his arms

and legs seemed to have no bones in them.

As an ordinary casualty, he was not worth wasting precious time over, but as Curly Boyle, the savior of his tank—well, let the Heinie wait!

Then a great shell struck the ruin of the tower and finished the tank, a fragment of which ripped off a piece of Curly's shoulder. The blear-eyed sergeant shook his fist at the Vaterland and said it was a dirty trick.

Surgeons came up and started Curly on the long way to the rear to a ghastly relief station. The rough handling Curly was receiving here was ended by a shell that killed the surgeon, and wounded Curly further. Another surgeon took up the interrupted task and turned Curly over to stretcher-bearers, who ran back with him. One of these was killed and the other wounded, and Curly thrown sprawling.

A corporal, who was bringing back a number of Germans carrying their own wounded, made four of them spill two dead Heinies on the ground and take up Curly and the living stretcher-bearer.

Eventually Curly reached the first line of ambulances and was shoved into one. The way to the next hospital was under heavy fire. A

A First National Picture. *The Patent Leather Kid.*

CURLY BOYLE WAS A PRIZE-FIGHTER WHO HAD A WAY WITH HIM.

shell tore up the road ahead. The ambulance driver jammed on the brakes to reverse. Another shell tore up the road in the rear. The driver leaped out, built a hasty bridge of stone and timber, worried across it, and jounced on his way. A German airplane pursued him and finally caught him with a dropped bomb before it was driven off by an American plane. The ambulance was crushed, and the wounded killed or wounded anew.

But another ambulance gathered the living fragments. There was hesitation whether or not to include Curly, ambiguous between alive and dead; but they slipped him in to save the trouble of deciding.

All this while, the Patent Leather Kid had been doing her stuff wherever her band of mummers halted. She had immense success with her act, but she could not keep her promise to herself that she would dance alone.

Too many dismal soldiers eyed her luscious body, their starved eyes aching with meek longing to hold beauty to their hearts just once more before they courted misery, ugliness and maybe death.

After her dance she went always to the huts again without stopping to change her costume.

She let whoever asked her for a dance hug her and wamble her about. Sometimes she felt a soldier kiss her hair. Sometimes hungry lips brushed her ear. Sometimes some famished rake would flirt a little. Why should she care? Who was she to stiffen herself and murmur, "Sir!"

She returned the clinches and pretended to be overcome with equal love.

She passed her twenty-five thousandth mile, and still she could not stop.

One midnight after the last soldier had ground her last toe the last time and the hut closed down, she went stumbling back to her sleeping quarters so tired that she had just decided to lie down in the street to take the toothache out of her feet when she realized that she was passing an improvised hospital where an endless procession of litters was being dumped outside in the dark.

As she paused shuddering, a surgeon, maniac with overwork and horror, stepped out of the house. The shaft of light illumined the startling figure of the half-naked Patent Leather Kid—all too manifestly a woman. He growled:

"Here, you! We need you!"

Fay was too tired to protest or resist. She

went in with him on tipsy feet and the sight she saw had either to kill her or refresh her. It woke her with the flaring pain of driving a tack up under the finger-nail. She fell back, gibbering: "I'm sorry, sir, but I—I don't know anything but dancing."

"You can hand me things, can't you? And hold things—including your tongue. Mrs. Vanderhoef will tell you?"

Mrs. Vanderhoef was a New York woman of enormous wealth and size. She had sold two thousand cups of chocolate and had been shuffling bedward to take a heavy weight off her feet when the surgeon saw her. He had pressed her into service an hour ago. Fay almost fainted at the sight of her. She was scarlet from head to foot, her white hair matted with blood, every inch of her drenched and dripping.

These two extremes from the opposite poles of New York quality and beauty were equaled here by the bitter need for womanhood. Fay's patent leather suit and her slim bare shoulders and legs were soon of an equal red with Mrs. Vanderhoef's uniform.

The worst was the slipping on the floor. And the things Fay had to hold! to hand! and

to take away! And then the silence! Nothing but the little clink and slish of knives, the ripping of gauze and tape, the surgeon's curt demands, the uncouth animal noises the soldiers made trying to keep from distressing the ladies with a sign of their unearthy pain.

This once wanton little girl and this once snobbish matron, this once dapper surgeon and these once hale and hearty lads now crimson with gore and doddering through a red Gehenna of anguish were all doing things that nobody could have done if everybody had not been doing them—the foe, the Allies, the least and the greatest men, animals, machines.

In honest mathematics, nothing multiplied by infinity is nothing still. But in the sardonic nonsense of war, it became infinity; the impossible became universal.

In the times of sanity, Fay would have died of horror before she could have helped in the benevolent butchery of one of these poor boys who were brought in like rolls of cloth, cut, slashed, patched together and carted away. To have witnessed one such operation would have sent Fay to the floor in a swoon or howling in flight. But as she passed the knives that must gouge dozens and dozens and dozens of

mutilated wretches, she never even sighed to realize that further hundreds were on the way to her door, and millions were yet to be massacred along the incalculable frontier of the war.

The first sound she made to show that she was not a mere handy kitchen cabinet of utensils was when the surgeon threw back a blanket from a thing more like a scarecrow than a man. The rips and blotches in the uniform were an index of appalling wounds.

Fay glanced dully overshoulder, from the boiler where she was blistering her fingers snatching steel instruments from scalding water. Then she let out a little whine and caught at Mrs. Vanderhoef to keep from falling.

The surgeon made a swift survey of the stretcher's contents and the tag attached, threw back the blanket and growled: "Take him away. He's past all mending."

Fay shrieked and clawed the surgeon: "No! No! No! It's Coily Berl!"

"I can't help it if it's General Pershing. I can't waste precious time on him."

"But you gotta! It's Coily! It's my boy. He was so brave. He hadda be! for he hadda whip himself foist."

"I'm sorry, honey, but——"

"You save him now or I'll wreck this whole Gawdam' joint!"

The surgeon blinked his eyes, came out of the coma of his frenzy, and snapped: "Well, why don't you fetch the anesthetic?"

Mrs. Vanderhoef, with a blur of tears in her parched eyes, tried to check Fay and break it gently to her, but she had dashed past and learned the grim fact, announced it with a moan:

"Oh, Gawd! It's all gone!"

The fierce eyes of the surgeon softened a little as he laid his awful hand on Fay's shoulder and muttered: "Better let him sleep."

"Would he—would he wake up?"

"Not in this world, my child."

"This woild is the only one I know. You bring him back and give him his chance to make good, d'ya hear, or—or—oh, don't lose me my Coily now!"

"Hold hard, then!"

At the first thrust of the knife, Curly came back from wherever he was. He saw the crimson caricature of Fay, everything red, red. He gasped in a lusk of voice:

"Are we in hell, Kid?"

She kissed him and whispered: "Yes, but we're half way through, Coily boy. It's goin' to hoit—it's goin' to hoit woiss than anybody was ever hoit before. But they can't down Coily Berl, the comin' champ—the champi'n of the woil', can they, Coily?"

That was the word he needed—an appeal to his pride, his swagger, his conceit. He was—he must be Coily Berl. It was all he had to help him—that and the ferocious little fingers clenching his, and the warm christening of tears from other eyes.

Through Curly's tortured soul ran a phantasmagory of tanks, rolling over him, munching him with the alligator-jawed rollers, shrapnel searing him, bayonets piercing him, shells filling him with ragged iron in a pit of fog whose only light was a will-o'-the-wisp in patent leather, glinting and beckoning.

There was no anesthetic but nature's drug of exhaustion. When Curly could hurt no more, he hurt no more. He fell into what Fay hoped was sleep, but it might be what it looked more like.

For hours and hours Fay darted from the surgeon's elbow to look at Curly, wondering whether he were still in that great bolt of

bandages, or had gone on his way. She fainted at last and Mrs. Vanderhoef laid her by Curly's side with a part of his blanket over her. She slept hours and hours of woe away, and when she woke with a start, she wrung a groan from Curly that was better than the silence she dreaded most.

When that hospital was evacuated, Fay went back with the body that was just alive enough not to grow cold. She and Curly came to rest in a base hospital that had been a palace.

Here all of Curly's visible wounds healed, and all his bones were knit until he was restored to a health that was faultless except for one thing: he could not move a muscle from his neck down.

To a man whose whole life and ambition had been muscular, who had thought of hardly anything but the perfection of his sinews so that he should be the most agile, the most forceful being on earth of his weight, a life sentence to immobility was the ultimate doom. His very frenzies could find no expression. He never had had any language beyond the vocabulary of rough sport. Now he could not make even a gesture of protest or of defiance. He could

not clench that fist which was to him what a brush is to a painter, a chisel to a sculptor, a pen to an author, a rifle to a soldier. His fist was himself. Life confronted him as a nightmare in which he was himself the marble monument of what he might have been.

With blurred speech from uncertain lips he babbled to Fay.

"I got the K. O. for keeps. It ain't gonna stop at the count of ten or ten million. I gotta lay here forever and ever like the ossified man in the muzhum. I'm petterfied."

None could understand his woe better than Fay, for her life was also a career of muscles. The speed and rhythmic pulse of her members were her heaven, and her reason and reward for existence.

She could imagine herself frozen and made Curly's inferno her own.

At first she tried, as people always do, to console the victim by belittling his affliction and pointing out how much worse it might have been. But she soon saw that this was poison to Curly.

Thereafter she poured out her grief. There was no need to pretend. She had merely to let her heart flow. She wept so bitterly that

it became Curly's business to console her by making light of his disaster.

Sometimes she would dance for him to while away the endless hours. His eyes drank her in and he sighed:

"You're the one best bet for dancin'. You'll be woith a million to some manager when the war's over."

"That's the stuff, boy. You'll lay still and take the rest you've oined and mama'll go out and dance and bring home the bacon to her baby."

"She will like hell! Do you think I'm the kind of a guy would let a goil hamstring herself tryin' to take care of me? The gov'ment will do that. You go on about your business and forget you've ever knew me."

Self-sacrifice from Curly! Altruism from Curly! Rage because somebody else was to be incommoded for his sake! Love that could order its love into exile for her sake!

"Oh, Coily, quit bein' so good! Haul off and give me a slam in the map for the sake of old times. You're so sweet nowadays I'm afraid you're goin' to toin into a dam' angel. Be yourself, Coily! Be yourself!"

When Hugo Breen was granted leave, he

traced Curly as soon as he could. He was embarrassed to find Fay with him. It was confusing to see the man who had hated him so well and saved his life, lying helpless in the care of the girl they had fought over.

In revenge he dumped a whole scuttleful of coals of fire on Curly's head. He praised him with an extravagance that became Hugo well and endeared him further to Fay. He announced that his battle report had recommended Curly for decoration, and the recommendation had been approved. A medal would soon be decorating Curly's manly chest.

Curly smiled feebly and said: "I thank you, sir, and I hope you'll excuse me not saluting, but I can't seem to lay hold of me hand."

He suffered a new pang when Fay went out with Hugo and did not come back for a long time. By then Curly had whipped himself again and he managed to disgorge his thought: "I'm glad you've took up with that guy. He's nutty about you and he'll make you a swell husbin'."

"Oh, ye-yuh? Well, not in this life, dear-ree. What I was talkin' to him about was gettin' some new dope on you. He's going to bring

down the swellest soigeons in the business, and give you a real shake-down."

As a matter of fact Hugo had implored Fay not to sacrifice her youth and beauty to a man she could not help, and to join her life to his own, but she had only smiled and told him not to make her laugh since she had chapped lips. She kissed him and told him to run along and bring up the top sergeants in the medical world.

The big boys came down and went over Curly and through him, praised his condition and said that his only trouble was mental. All he needed to control his muscles was to believe that he could. He was suffering from an inferiority complex, shell shock, and a kind of spiritual lockjaw.

Fay was in ecstasies over the news. And so was Curly. But when he tried to move his muscles, nothing happened. He gnashed his teeth in an anguish of effort. He knitted his brows and strove till the sweat oozed. His head rolled from side to side in defeat.

"Nothin' doin', honey. It can't be did."

"It's gotta be did, Coily! All you gotta do is take up your bed and walk. Then you can begin trainin' once more, you can go back to

America now and be the champi'n prize-fighter of the woild."

His head swung sidewise again. "I don't wanna go back in no ring and paste a lot of pugs in the snoot. I wanna go back with my regiment. I wanna be a soldier. I wanna fight for—for my country."

Tears were suddenly on his eyelashes in a gush of patriotism from unknown wells in his heart. Fay smiled sadly.

"Coily, ain't you fought enough for it? Your sweet country has mighty near ruined you."

"Yeah, you said it. But love ain't run like a business proposition. Seems like the people you love best are the ones you do the most for, not the ones that do the most for you. I never really loved me mother till I begun to toin over to her me prize-ring money. She didn't last long enough to get much of it. You're differ'nt. I never done nothin' for you but give you trouble, and take your heart out of you. So you ought to love me a lot."

"I do, Coily! Gawd knows, I do!"

"Well, that's the way I love America. I used to notice how the woist wounded soldiers was the ones that had the most patertism. Jake Stuke says it's the bunk. But I never knew

I had a country till I'd gave her all I had."

Fay would not relinquish hope of bringing him back to the glory of his strength. He tried and tried but at each defeat his effort was more feeble. Even desire began to flicker out for lack of hope to feed on. He sought to explain it to Fay:

"If you'd ever been knocked out, Fay, you'd know just how it is. When the Joisey Skeeter give me me foist K. O., I was just this way. I was wise to every little thing. I seen the champi'nship fadin'. But I couldn't get up. I simpully couldn't get up. And now I've got a poimanent K. O. I can't find the right noive to pull me muscles. I bust meself tryin' but—I'd give all the woild—but you—if I could budge one of them concrete toes of mine, but I can't—I can't. Nothin' doin'."

Fay gave up nagging him. She settled down to be the lifelong nurse of a lifelong invalid.

Other people badgered him. Puffy Kinch waddled into the hospital like a human tank. He had a wound stripe, promotion and a decoration for distinguished valor—a word he could not pronounce. And he was greedy for more. He was on his way back into the t'ick of it.

This news rocked Curly like a jab in the

jaw. But after one mad struggle he smiled at Puffy.

"Over the river, Puff! Give the Kaiser a sweet kiss for me when you ketch him."

Then he closed his eyes and pretended to sleep. Fay could tell that he was whipping himself again, throttling down the outcries and curses of unendurable defeat.

Often they put him in a wheeled chair and let her trundle him about the corridors and the great marble verandas. Sometimes she could get men to carry his chair down the steps, and then she would wheel him out on the grass.

Trees and flowers and grass were all right, but they were not in his line, and he wearied of them. From the distance they could often hear the blurred flourish of bugles, the dim thud of drums.

One day there was such a fanfare of brass and such a hint of far-off cheers that he urged her to run his chair down to the street. The eagerness in his face was like an inner sunlight. She knew that his soul was marching, though his poor feet were but so much lead. Through the iron railing of the fence they saw a regiment in khaki—Americans!

The French were cheering them mightily, because their aid assured triumph after prolonged doubt. The Americans rode in on the chariots of the dawn after a night of storm. These Americans seemed to be hurrying to the battle lest they arrive too late.

Fay, beaming on them with pride, heard Curly speak and asked him what he had said. He did not answer but she gradually pieced together the remembered sounds. He had groaned:

"Oh Gawd, lea' me go back in!"

Standing at his right side she put her left arm about his shoulder and squeezed the rock it was. The band blaring the jazz that had set all Europe agog, suddenly struck a more solemn strain. It began to bump the bumps. Curly croaked:

"'O-oh, say, can you see by the——' I wouldn't salute when I could, and now——"

His head leaned out a little; hats were falling off in a breaking wave. Through the iron pickets he could see a torment of color in the breeze, a writhing, star-sprinkled rainbow above the helmets and the bayonet-glitter. That old flag was coming along! It was always coming along! And always trying to fight free from its

A First National Picture. *The Patent Leather Kid.*

"STEER CLEAR OF MY GIRL," BOYLE SHOUTED.

own staff—beating about the faces of the color-guard like a wild bird, a red-winged, white-breasted bluebird!

"Fay!" he gasped. "Me cap! Me cap! Take off me cap!"

She whipped it from his brow and held it over his heart and was so much a soldier now in behalf of her disabled veteran that she brought her right hand smartly to her brow and kept it there till the flag should have passed.

As she stood transfixed, she felt a trembling under her left hand and a mighty thumping of Curly's heart. Wondering, but holding herself rigid at attention, she let her glance fall upon Curly and saw that he was being shaken with a great ague.

She could not see his face, but his head was bent as if he were trying to lift a tremendous weight—wrecking himself in a destroying endeavor. There was a quivering at his side. His right hand was shuddering! The hooked talons of the fingers were unbending, forcing themselves outward, straightening, drawing together!

The whole forearm was tremulous now. It was rising, rising, with a sense of rending itself from marble restraints. It came up slowly

but with a deadly certainty till the forefinger touched the brow over the right eye. The head came back and up, erect.

Fay's tears of joy were lost in his curls as she understood that he was rigid now only because he wanted to be—rigid only till the flag went by.

And the flag went by, swirling, leaping, joyously determined to be free.

What A Girl!

She was named after—just about three hundred years after—the belle of old New Amsterdam, Anneke Jans, who became the wife of Parson Bogardus, and left to her heirs a farm that has been the heart of New York and the cause of litigation ever since.

Anneke Jans would have been dazed at a glimpse of the skyscraper crop that has grown up on her farm; but at the sight of Anneke Jans Jones of 1927, she would have fainted in a heap of petticoats. In her day when a coarse Dutch burgher accused Anneke of intentionally revealing one ankle as she skipped across a puddle in the Bowery, she sued him for criminal libel.

Anneke Jans Jones had all but passed the point where there was anything left to reveal. As for disclosing an ankle, hadn't she joined a private bathing club in Florida because the prudes forbade women to walk the public beaches without stockings? One-piece bathing suits, very low in the neck and very high on

the thigh, were permissible, but the desperate conservatives felt that they must draw some line somewhere, or go out of business entirely.

The original Anneke would have buried her head in the sand at the first glimpse of any of the thousands of hussies who swarmed along the surf. For one thing, she had probably never taken even a private bath in her life and could not even have imagined the ladies who swim the English Channel in nothing but a social veneer of axle grease.

One step further and the world would come to the end of all its immemorial worries over costume. Miss Jones was one of the leaders in hastening the return to Eden. Her cards read "Miss Anneke Jans Jones," but her friends called her "Anneke Janneke." It had a jazzier sound. The things she wore and didn't wear! The things she believed and didn't believe, said and didn't say! Thought and not! Danced!

One did not have to go back three centuries to find people for Miss Jones to startle. She and her mad gang rocked her contemporaries and made a wild earthquake where they walked. Preachers reeled in their pulpits as they hurled vain Jeremiads at her. Editors made their

editorials smoke. Moralists used the most immoral expressions. But her motto still was, "On with the dance! let jazz be unrefined!" Even the Black Bottom was growing staid.

Her watchword was ever, "What next?"

Among all the wild men who frequented Anneke, there was only one who tried to check her mad career. This was the young hot-head Nat Rider, who had flown in France for the French before his country entered the war and afterward with his own people. There was hardly a bone in his body that had not been broken, but all of them had knitted, and when the peace came he took up commercial aviation. He was a glutton for punishment.

Otherwise he would never have tried to redeem Miss Jones. His flying skill had won him a job with a company aiming to develop aerial commerce, and he had been set to the task of interesting capitalists, politicians and pacifists in the project. When he forced the guards about old Caldwell Jones, banker among bankers, he felt that he had done more than when he pierced a cordon of Boche airships. The worst was yet to come. He encountered the daughter Anneke.

He was immediately taken with what he

supposed to be a violent dislike for her and a ferocious resentment of nearly everything she did, said, wore and was.

It was really an attack of love at first sight; for love always makes a man a puritan toward the object of his love. He may or may not enjoy the opposite mood in private, but in public he must have her a perfect prude.

With other girls Nat Rider had been wicked gladly, had admired their naughtinesses and encouraged them. But the audacities of Anneke did what no preacher could do; they converted him into a missionary of all the proprieties, a precisian, a fanatic reformer. He felt a call to shatter her to bits and then remold her nearer to his heart's desire.

Misunderstanding himself as thoroughly as he misunderstood her, he made unconscious love by trying to tear down all her habits of mind and conduct.

He interested her as a hero until she learned that he had high moral ideals—at least for her. Then she tried to shake him. But he would not be shaken.

She held him by the fascination of the perilous and the unconquerable. He told himself he did not love her or want her for himself.

Yet he let her break his heart a dozen times a day. It knitted up again at night, and he went after her again. He was, indeed, a glutton for punishment.

He hated the company Anneke kept, and winced at the ridicule she heaped on his most sacred beliefs (for her to hold). He left her in rages but always came again, to fight again that airy duel with her soul, hoping to bring it down to earth from its lawless flights into realms forbidden.

His employers offered him a chance to better himself by taking complete charge of their Western office, but he put off accepting till he had converted Anneke.

He grew so desperate that one day, having tried everything else, he thought to bribe her with a promise of love. He did not intend to go through with it, for he would as soon have married a wildcat; but he wanted to know if there was any influence that could tame her. So he burst out with:

"Anneke Janneke, I could kill you for what you do and say. The only decent things about you are what you might be, and are not."

She was not even offended. She grinned. "Go on, old ashtray, your story intrigues muh."

"But if you would quit being so disreputable, I could love you, damn you!"

She narrowed her eyes and mused, "I wonder."

This was meant for, and possibly was, deep wisdom. But Nat waived it.

"I could! If you'd only settle down and be womanly and ladylike and all, I'd even ask you to marry me right now."

"What more could a fellow ask? Half a mo, my lad, and I'll blow you a ring." From her frescoed lips she exhaled a circlet of smoke and thrust into it the third finger of her left hand. The blue film broke and vanished, and she sighed. "Divorced already! And now who gets the custody of the children?"

He gnashed his teeth and wailed. "You haven't a decent thought in your naked head!"

She could have been so beautiful, so sweet, so innocent! Her features were as exquisite as bisque. When she forgot herself her eyes were soft and her lips a babe's. And she was very young.

Nat could not help imagining her half a century back, old-fashioned, with her hair in braids; her cheeks tinted only by their fleeting

blushes; her body smothered and forgotten in a pattern of gingham plaids or a flower-showered muslin; nothing of her visible but timid hands stitching at embroidery, and slipper tips mouse-shy beneath the frills of her long skirts.

His fancy and his longing saw her so, but his eyes declared her as she was: a little head with hair clipped closer than his own; brows half plucked away and lined in black; lashes beaded with lead; cheeks daubed like a clown's; mouth a splash of fresh paint; her only gown a black satin chemise exposing all her chest, and a bit of bare flesh above the rarely hidden garters; her stockings hardly more than an expense.

Her attitudes were cubistic; her far-flung flimsy arms wore only a wrist watch, there was always a cigarette-holder in one hand, usually a cigarette case in the other. She sprawled and tossed herself about with the unrestrained impatience of her appalling language. She was as demure as an unbroken mustang, and her chief ambition seemed to be to remain unbroken.

Nat Rider had not been prudish about the girls in France, especially the French girls, had not even been distressed by some of the American women abroad. But it sickened him to see Anneke Jones misbehave. He vowed he would

save her or break her neck, and he had a very narrow squeak from doing both.

Perhaps he dimly understood that she had the qualities of her defects. She had no modesty; but then she had no false modesty, either. She had none of the dear old-time timidities; but then she also lacked the old-time cowardices.

She was shameless in her zest for improper knowledge; but then she was not nasty nice. Instead of finding nearly everything indecent or improper, she found hardly anything so.

She lacked the shy and uplifted gaze of the docile ewe-lamb, but after all a lamb promises to be only a sheep. The pretty meekness of old was after all a kind of sex-servility, and Anneke substituted for it a more thrilling sense of equality and emulation. She asked no handicaps from men. She started from scratch and a fellow had to go some to keep up with her. Which stimulated a man to his best.

And then, of course, there was Anneke's tremendous efficiency in place of the sweet incapabilities that made the women of yesteryear more or less winsome idiots outside the kitchen, the sewing-room and the nursery, three places where a man did not belong.

She got into scrapes, no end; but she got herself out of them or took her medicine. She asked no man to take the blame or shield her by a gentlemanly perjury.

There was that awful night-club parade, for instance.

Nat called on her to take her to the opera. He had paid a whacking price for the tickets, and dressed himself to the nines, only to have Anneke decide that she was in no mood for educational music.

"I've seen it a dozen times. Let's go out on the loose. I feel two natures struggling within me, both of them devilish."

Nat protested with all his eloquence until she rounded on him with a contemptuous: "Ah, go home and cry!"

He grated his teeth and clenched his hands in a fool's agony. She glanced down and fell back in pretended terror.

"Would you strike me with the babby in muh yarms? Oh, fireman, spare muh child!"

He tried to squelch her by acidity: "You're not the least bit funny. You're simply disgusting."

She plucked down his tall head and kissed him reverently on the brow, murmuring: "Be

good sweet maid, and let who will be clev-ah!" He wilted. She gasped: "Omigawd! There's rouge on Priscilla's virgin bean." She took out her handkerchief and held it before his lips. " 'Pit on it, Sweetheart, and I'll rub the badge of shame away." When he refused she stamped her foot. " 'Pit on Mama's hanky, I tell you!" When he would not, she moistened her handkerchief herself and mopped his forehead, showing him the crimson red stains and sighing: "The bond of blood."

"Honestly, Anneke, this isn't even intelligent."

"I know it, soul of my soul. I'm not intelligent. That's why I'm just off for night school. G'by!"

When she flounced toward the door, he followed, seizing her arm and begging her not to waste herself on such rot. She drew herself up with a "Sir" and removed his hand from her arm as if it were a tomato worm.

Then she danced out to her town car and told the chauffeur, Tufts, to drive her to a certain number in the silent Forties. As he was closing the door on her, Nat pushed in after her and sat down protesting.

"Are you going to that dirty speak-easy again?"

"I am, if you don't mind. It's much too early for the night clubs."

The car drew up before the rear end of a dark theater, a few doors away from a shabby residence apparently empty. She said, "Hello, Bill!" to a lookout patrol, mounted the time-gnawed brownstone steps and rang the bell. A wicket opened in the door and one eye scrutinized her.

Instantly she was welcomed into the vestibule of what had once been a fashionable home. The salon was now a seedy dining-room, where a few solemn couples were mumbling together at various tables.

The proprietor shook hands with Anneke and bowed when she introduced Nat as "Mr. Payne B. Keeler, the new infernal revenue inspector." Anneke took Scotch and Nat nodded for the same to keep her company.

Into the speak-easy at intervals drifted various morose beings, including Clifford Larkin, a dramatic critic, who was seeking a tonic to help him through the first night of what he pronounced, "the most putrid show in the history of man."

His words fell pleasantly on the ear of the author, John Thackett, who had also dashed in. He came over to call Larkin the flat-headedest critic in the universe, and the least capable of grasping an artistic idea.

Larkin laughed and offered him a drink, saying, "I hope it's wood alcohol."

Thackett answered, "I hope so!"

They clicked glasses with mutual contempt, and departed to witness the rest of the première.

Still Anneke sat glumly drinking, smoking and waiting for the theaters to turn their audiences out into the night clubs. She waited until Thackett returned in abysmal gloom, to complain that his play was years ahead of time and would not be appreciated till after the death of this cheap commercial generation.

He was still comparing himself to the misjudged immortals when Larkin blew in to describe, over Thackett's living body, the funeral oration he had written for his morning paper.

Thackett tried to be a good sport, remembering how, in his day as a critic, he had flayed other dreamers, but he claimed to be entirely impersonal as he defended the thesis of his play. His artistic vocabulary grew more and

more esoteric with every highball. Larkin answered him, theory for theory and glass for glass, while Nat Rider watched them with the interest he would have taken in a Chinese debating society.

Nat could have talked aviation in any of its details for days at a time, but the mechanics and the mechanicians of the drama bored him to madness. He mumbled to Anneke:

"Are you actually enjoying this swill?"

"Not in the least; but it's swell swill, and hideously informational."

"Please come home and let them talk each other to death. I've been gassed once and I didn't bring my mask."

"Run along to bed, my cherub, these two are growing funnier and funnier as their tongues get thicker. We'll inspect the night clubs now."

To his horror, she invited Thackett and Larkin to be her guests and they accepted. They even allowed her to pay the bill, or would have if Nat had not snatched it from her hand.

The creative and the conservative artists suffered themselves to be guided, head to head, still wrangling, out of the house and into Anneke's car, where they debated across her

while Nat yawned openly and cursed inwardly.

The Perroquet de Paris was refreshingly clean and refulgent and packed with gorgeously dressed men and women who sat at illuminated glass tables in whose interiors goldfish swam. Anneke begged Nat to dance with her and he consented. They glided about a translucent glass floor where every dancer, like the swan on still Saint Mary's lake, floated double, swan and shadow.

To Nat, who knew no poetry, it was a dance of cut-out dolls, with everybody's inverted duplicate fastened to his feet like Peter Pan's shadow. When Nat let his eyes fall, he was embrassed to behold Anneke as if he were looking up at her from beneath a bridge.

He had the renewed sensation of times when he had flown in the clouds and could not tell whether he were topsy-turvy or not. It angered him to see certain spectators at the tables staring down into the glass floor with the gloating smiles of peeping Toms. He grumbled to Anneke about it, only to be bowled over by her supreme cynicism.

"What does it matter what they see? I'm built more or less according to the same old Mother Eve model."

A First National Picture. *The Patent Leather Kid.*

EASY MONEY FOR CURLY, THE HANGERS ON THOUGHT ADMIRINGLY.

He snarled into her hair: "And if the old serpent had talked to you, you'd have taught him things he never dreamed of."

She hugged him and murmured: "It's the first compliment you've ever paid me, Darlink."

He stopped short and, ignoring the sweet music discoursed by the orchestra of the young millionaire who owned the place, led her back to the table where Larkin and Thackett were still talking dramaturgy. In fact they were now planning to collaborate on a play that was to redeem the drama. Nat would not dance with Anneke again, so she proposed that they move on. Nat made a dismal hole in his funds by paying the bill and when he reached the sidewalk he announced that he had a headache. Anneke's answer was:

"I begged you to let me pay the check."

That was the most shameless cut of all. He pleaded: "I've got a hard day ahead of me."

"Then go to bed."

"But I don't like the looks of your chauffeur. He's been drinking."

"That's news!"

"He might get insolent."

"If he does I'll knock him down."

"I won't leave you with him. Please come home!"

"Not tonight, Sweetheart. The curfew law comes in force next week, and all these dear little joints will have to close at three. So I'm going the rounds while I can."

He thought with a sigh of the money it would cost him. His earnings came too hard to be spent cheerfully in purchasing nothing but misery and disgust. Yet he would have forged a check rather than let Anneke pay for anything in his presence. He crowded in with Thackett and Larkin and Anneke and the next stop was at Texas Guinan's hostelry. Anneke smiled with democratic tolerance at the loud familiarity of the greeting of the hostess, but Nat blushed to the marrow of his bones.

The hilarious good-fellowship of this picnic ground whetted Anneke's appetite for more, and she would not be restrained from a visit at the Club Richman, another at the Anatole, and glimpses of others.

Even Nat Rider could not quite resist the innocent nonsense of the grown-up children at the Dover. He laughed as they cavorted through their mad improvisations crying, "He's a gipsy! Yessir, that's a gipsy."

When the tireless Anneke led her wobbly little flock down into the chilly street, the black sky was turning mulatto, and even Tufts yawned meaningly at her announcement of an intention to push on into Westchester.

He went to his place with ugly mutterings that Nat could not resent, for when he had helped in the toppling art colony he paused on the running-board to implore her once more to be human.

She cried out imperiously, "Drive on, Tufts!"

Nat insisted, "Anneke Janneke, I forbid you to."

She gave him a thrust that sent him staggering backward. She slammed the door and motioned to Tufts. Nat started to run after the car but was hopelessly distanced and saw it swirl round a corner and fly northward.

Nat cursed the spirit of the times for turning all the nice girls into mænads on the wine of new freedom. He looked for a taxicab to follow, but none came along except such as were filled already. He turned south, staggering drowsy, yet aching with anxiety.

Anneke herself had already repented her harshness with Nat, without ever suspecting

that she bullied him because she was afraid of him. She was beginning to doubt that her soul was indomitable and that she was always going to be its captain.

Her terror of Nat Rider was greater than her fear of the mutinous Tufts, who was taking a malign pleasure in courting disaster. He crossed one dip in the road at such velocity that Thackett and Larkin and Anneke were shot upward and their skulls collided with the ceiling of the car. Anneke was almost knocked out, but Thackett and Larkin came down sobered enough to take fright. They pleaded with Anneke to stop the driver but she laughed at them.

"You want drama. How's this for your third act?"

Somehow they lived to reach a road-house overlooking the wakening Hudson River. In the trees birds were twittering vocal dewdrops and the eastern horizon was a welter of wild-rose petals.

Anneke spread her arms with pantheism and breathed in the poetry of the morning. She had smoked herself into insomnia and the liquor she had taken had not availed to deaden her vague uneasiness. Strangely lonely for

Nat, she suddenly realized that what she was running away from was the cowardice of a womanly surrender to love. Nat Rider showed a tendency to claim a mastery she had vowed she would never yield to anybody. She renewed her vow and assured herself that he should never break her to the bit and bridle, and would only break himself in the attempt.

She had a poor opinion of men anyway and laughed derisively as Thackett and Larkin tried to disguise their increasing fear of Tufts. Thackett was saying:

"We've got great idea for a play—goin' revolutionize drama. We'd like to live to finish it, so 'f you don' mind I'll stop here and pick up li'l sleep an' 'en do a bit of writin' on s'nopsis while dear old Larkie goes back to town."

Larkin explained: "You see, there's 'nother firs' night t'night and my paper's counting on me to protec' my dear public from liking wrong things. So I'll just call li'l taxi for the journey back. 'N' I 'dvise you to share it with me instead of trustin' precious life to that hyena."

"Whassat! Whassat! Who's callin' who a hyena?" the hyena barked. "Who says I can't drive?"

Larkin hastened to answer: "Not me! I

know you can drive. I was only sayin' you can't drive me."

"Who says I can't drive you? Who's you that you're so hard to drive? I'd have you know 'at I can drive anybody in this whole world from Pres'nt Coolish down."

Thackett felt called upon to intervene, and overawe Tufts by outnumbering him. He tried to sag his lower lip even lower than Tufts' as he growled in his deepest tones: "Wait ta minute! Young fel', if we decide go home our own way, who's goin' prevent us?"

"Me! I'm what's goin' to. We all come out togedder 'n' we all go home togedder or I'm a liar, and who says I am?"

His menace cowed them and Thackett yielded.

"Well, if you'll drive ver' caref'ly."

"Ten years a shofur and never past a lossenger," said Tufts.

He thrust his victims within, slammed the door on them and took his place. He also paused for a swig from a flask before he weighed anchor. He swung round the curved driveway with his lee-scuppers awash, and went down the hill as if he were on skis.

Anneke reveled in the risk, but her guests

pounded on the glass and gesticulated until Tufts stopped the car, ripped the door open and demanded who was driving the car.

Larkin and Thackett tumbled out and announced their intention of walking home. They wanted to know if this were a free country or not and reached the point of singing "The Star-Spangled Banner" as an argument.

Tufts came to attention and held his cap over his heart during the anthem, but with alcoholic logic insisted that in the land of the free he had a perfect right to take anybody he wanted to to the home of the brave.

Furthermore, he proclaimed that he had his feelings as well as any other guy, and he wouldn't allow no dramatic cricket to criticize his artistic ability as a shofur. He exploited two fists as further evidence of his ability.

Thackett and Larkin preferred to die on the field of honor rather than at the black bottom of a ditch. Anneke found herself with a small riot on her hands and realized that Tufts was in a mood either to destroy his passengers on the spot or to hurl them into eternity later.

So she put in, with a motherly tone: "Tufts, I've asked too much of you. You've worn yourself out in my service, and you've earned a

rest. You get in and ride and let me drive."

She had touched the one right chord in his befuddled brain. He broke down and wept:

"You're right, at 'at, Miss Jonesh. Some folks t'ink us shofurs ain't yooman. But we got feelin's and we don't like 'em hurted."

"Yes, yes, of course you are, you have!" she cooed as she pushed him into the car, where he sprawled in the farther corner, sobbing. Anneke motioned Thackett and Larkin to follow.

She took the wheel and meshed the gears with a reassuring skill. She raced the cheerful wind so cleverly that Thackett and Larkin were encouraged to resume their argument. By and by they were appealing to Tufts to decide a crucial riddle in exposition.

He represented the great people, the Polloi, the Soil, the Folk instead of the folks. About all he could contribute to the discussion was a large flask from his hip pocket. They shared its wisdom with him and paid him homage as a fascinating institution. They listened with besotted earnestness to his ideas of what a guy had a right to expect when he paid his good coin for a seat in a teayter: He had a right to a laugh or a tear, but nobody hadn't no right to hand him a piece of cheese; if a guy wanted a

piece o' cheese he'd go to a delicatessen for it. This struck Thackett and Larkin as a very gospel of new thought. They accepted his utterances as the profoundities of the primitive and embraced him, addressing him as "good old Stuffts," the patron of the arts.

When he burst into song with a ribald ballad of the underworld, they found Rabelaisian merits in the lyric, pondered the tune, joined it, and embroidered it with barber-shop harmonies and artistic sour notes.

The car was resounding like a steam calliope when the laughing Anneke brought it into town. Finding two taxicabs standing outside a never-closed lunch room, she went in, hoisted a leg to a high stool and ordered a couple of sinkers and black coffee, while she bribed the taxi drivers to take each passenger to a destination.

She dragged from Larkin and Thackett their addresses and turned them over to the taximen. It took some diplomacy to tear them from "dear old Tufty," whom they left, not without tears.

Tufts told Anneke what swell guys them guys was, and cried himself to sleep. He slumbered undisturbed while she drove the car to her father's house. She was too heavy-eyed by

now to notice that Nat Rider saw her approaching and hurried away.

He had kept vigil in front of her home, expecting to see an ambulance roll up with her mangled body, and wondering if he had not better wait for her at the Morgue so that he might identify her remains, if any.

When he saw her coming along safe and sound and smiling, his terror changed to wrath, and he would not stop to let her know that he had cared.

He did not even relish the amazing picture she made: a lady dressed for the opera, her great mink collar thrown back revealing to the dawn a bosom decked only in a rope of pearls and the drooping rim of a crystal-beaded gown —a lady in no opera-box but on the outside seat of a town car on whose inside cushions lolled the drunken chauffeur.

Anneke, loving it and regretting that nobody else was aboard to enjoy it, drew up at the curb and let herself in with her latch-key. Finding the house man making himself a cup of coffee in the pantry, she told him to drive Tufts to his home. Then she drank his coffee and climbed the stairs to her room, still laughing.

She did not know that Nat Rider had sub-

stituted an icy shower-bath for his lost sleep, had gone to his office and announced that he was ready to go West at once.

It was a week before Anneke learned that he was gone, and she told herself she was glad of it. She would not let any man grow indispensable to her. The call of the wild recaptured her. She went Indian more than ever until her father and mother, her brothers and elder sisters were so scandalized that the family took off for Florida at the first hint of cold weather.

The mad scramble of the previous year's boom panic was missing and the region was restored to the splendors of nature somewhat sobered by two great windstorms, one from the realtors and the other from the clouds.

The people were fewer and as a rule wiser, but Anneke found enough of her own sort to make her parents agree that she would never settle down before some irredeemable folly ruined her for life.

Her father had long since given up commanding, or beseeching, or even advising her, since he had found out that some strange quirk of anarchy in her made her resent every form of coercion, however gentle. The most he dared

to do was to hint his opinions, and even his insinuations were guarded lest he drive her to the very extremes he dreaded.

One day he said: "What's become of that young fellow Rider we both used to see so often? He had just about persuaded me to go into his company when he vanished."

"He probably got tired chasing us both," said Anneke. "Why don't you send for him?"

"That's not a bad idea. Do you know his address?"

"No, but your secretary could find him, no doubt."

"No doubt," her father said, and then betrayed what he was thinking by a heavy-footed carelessness. "I remember his telling me that the hardest part of flying was the stopping and the landing, particularly if anything went wrong in the air. I wonder if the younger generation quite realizes that."

"I get you, Mr. Jones," said Anneke. "Thanks for the sermon."

"Oh, I'm not preaching, my dear! But I do sometimes wonder if you ever stop to think that the time might come when you would get tired of all this high flying and would want to come gracefully to earth and——"

"And be the good wife of a good man and raise a flock of babies at the maternal font?"

He winced at her flippancy and went on:

"You can't stay up in the air all your life, Anneke, and you'll find it harder and harder to land without a crash unless——"

She checked him with blood-curdling insolence: "Father darling, I never, never try to run your business. Why do you always try to run mine? They say you're pretty good in the little old counting-house, but in my field your ignorance is colossal. Don't forget that you're no longer a young girl."

He longed for the good old days when a father would have been considered a criminal if he had not used a horsewhip on such a daughter, to save her from the town whipping-post. But he would no more have dared to lay a rough hand on Anneke than on a buzz-saw. She would undoubtedly have torn him to pieces without the slightest filial compunction.

He watched her with sorrow since to him at least she was pure gold, however, squandered on a career of gambling—gambling with health, honor, good fame and life itself.

There was one sorry comfort. She was no

worse than she pretended to be. Perhaps she could not have been; but at least her father was denied the questionable luxury of many another father—he need never study his daughter's face and wonder how many lies were hidden by a doll-like stare, how much ugly knowledge might be disguised by a mask of innocence. Yet he often wished that Anneke would lie to him a little, pretend to be better than she was just for the convenience of living.

As a token of gratitude for his effort to advise her, she alarmed him unusually by taking up with a disreputable young adventurer named Medlicote, a mysterious fellow of wide acquaintance, wider debts and no visible means of support. He was more or less frank about his hopes of marrying Anneke, and was so polite to Anneke's father that the older man raged.

When he appealed to Anneke she tortured him by laughing, "You said I ought to settle down and marry."

It may have been that he sent in desperation for Nat Rider to come down and save her. It may have been that Rider's company merely ordered him to resume his quest of the old man's support.

In any case, Nat Rider left Chicago in a bliz-

zard and turned up in Florida on a day so hot that he feared a sunstroke. Nearly everybody had sought refuge in the ocean and he availed himself of a card to a beach club. There he found Anneke.

Pretending not to see her, he slashed through the surf and swam a somber mile up and down the coast. He was floating on his back and musing bitterly when suddenly his head was pulled under water and he found himself all tangled up with a slippery biped who turned out to be the laughing Anneke.

She had recognized him as he strode into the waves and, after a long hestitation, had swum out to him, telling herself that she pursued him only because he was so evidently trying to avoid her. As soon as she saw the glad light in his wet eyes, she perversely doused the glimmer by apologizing.

"Why, Nat, fancy meeting you! Forgive my familiarity. I thought you were Tom Medlicote."

His instant anger delighted her so that she turned and struck out for shore, bubbling with laughter. When Nat overtook her, she thrust out her arm and shook hands with him, saying:

"Do have a cup of tea! Did you swim down?

How did you leave your Sunday-school class?"

He was hurt enough to snap, "What a perfect little rotter you are!"

"Well, so long as I'm a perfect something, that's something, isn't it!" And she managed to dive out of sight in a most insulting manner.

With his eyes open Nat plunged after her and seizing her in his arms planted a kiss on her glaring eyes. She promptly planted a short-arm jab in the pit of the stomach. She had learned it from one of her brothers and it was smart enough to knock Nat's breath out.

The water he swallowed strangled him and he came to the surface so confused and so crushed with shame at being the man of all men to bring upon him such a rebuke from her of all women, that she took pity on him.

"Pardon my nasty temper, boy. But I never could endure submarine flirtation. I hate to shock the poor fish."

When they left the water he walked away from her, but she ran after him to say:

"It's darling to have you back again, Mr. Sunday. Nobody has tried to reform me for so long a time that I'm just famished for a lecture. Come to dinner, won't you? I'm going

A First National Picture. *The Patent Leather Kid.*

"YOU GOT TO LET HIM STAY FOUR ROUNDS," JAKE WARNED HIM.

to the bad afterwards, but Father would love to talk to you. You're both of the same age."

"I have another engagement, thanks," he mumbled, but she laughed:

"We'll expect you at eight, and don't forget to wash behind the ears."

He would not have gone if her father's secretary had not traced him and formally invited him. His duty to his company compelled him to accept, but it was not his duty to his company that made him accept Anneke's challenge when she left the house, saying:

"I dare you to come along!"

It was just such a party as Nat had often reveled in before he met Anneke—young people being young and older people trying to be, dancing, flirting, singing, drinking, silly games, off-color jokes, puerility stunts of all sorts.

But Anneke spoiled the feast for Nat by outdoing all the rest in everything. He did not realize what a spur he gave to her independence by merely seeming to resent it, or how much of her delight in shocking him lay in his readiness to be shocked. He abhorred priggery and was infuriated by her ability to fill him with it.

Suddenly the frivolity took a serious turn. Tom Medlicote dashed into the room, breath-

lessly announcing that he was escaping from a speed cop who had chased him for miles.

"I can't afford to go to jail now. If my father hears of it, I'm a total loss."

He began to unload bottles of liquor from his overcoat pockets. He said he was afraid of having them found on him because the cop had been drunk enough to scorn his bribe.

Tom had hardly distributed the contraband among his eager confederates before a flushed and irate policeman stormed in with truculent majesty. He had already confiscated and absorbed enough whiskey to be dangerous, and he had his hand on the holster of a huge pistol.

"I'm lookin' fo' ma man," he roared, "and Jake Stoat always get his man. I warn you folks not to assist nobody in defyin' a nofficer of the lawr. Where is he at?"

Medlicote was hiding, and the men in the party attempted to appease the policeman, but he flung them off roughly. Seeing a form behind a curtain he drew his pistol and growled:

"Come right out o' that, Buddy, or I'm agoin' to shoot you out." When Medlicote hesitated a moment, the officer began to count: "One—two——"

At that moment he felt a warm hand on his,

pressing the pistol aside. He looked down into the bewitching eyes of Anneke, who pleaded:

"Just one little dance, Jakie, before you go out into the night."

The deviltry in her eyes annulled his rage. She signaled to the band of pale-faced negroes to play and had Jake jigging before he realized her purpose. He fell into her swing, laughing boozily, "Well, I'll be gawdam."

As they danced, his pistol cleared a path before them. He retained only enough of his mission to call out:

"You behind the curtain there, don't you make no break while I'm dancin' with this little lady, or the old gun will sure spit!"

He kept turning his head as he whirled, and Anneke kept him whirling till he was so dizzy that she had to hold him up. He stopped at last and fell against the wall, but very close to Medlicote. He demanded of Anneke:

"Say, Lady, who-all are you, anyhaow?"

"Good Lord, don't you know me yet?" she answered. "Where's your memory? You've arrested me often enough to know my name."

"Have I?" he whooped. "Well, what is it?"

"Your old brain needs a little sharpening,

boy," she said. "Don't you move till Mama fixes you a little eye-opener."

To the dismay of all the protesting company, she darted from the room and returned with two long glasses filled from one of Medlicote's bottles.

"Whass iss?" the officer sniffed. "Smells like——"

"Sassyparilly," said Anneke. "Pre-war sassyparilly."

"Looky yere!" he roared. "Are you offerin' a officer of the lawr lawrless stuff?"

"Of course not, but I always understood that when a lady asked a gentleman to drink with her, he asked no questions."

"Well, I'm a gen'leman all right and nobody hadn't better deny it."

At the point of his pistol, the chorus admitted that he was a gentleman, two gentlemen, in fact. He touched brims with Anneke and they drained the glasses. When he recovered from the spasm induced in his frame, he was asking with tear-dimmed eyes:

"Am I a gen'leman now, Lady?"

"Indubitubally," said Anneke.

That struck him as the funniest thing he had ever heard and by the time he came out of his

convulsion Anneke was back with two more glasses. Then she wheedled her poor dupe into another dance. This time she alleged a fear of the pistol and asked him to lay it on the mantel where he could keep his eyes on it. His eye was soon so lost to all sense of direction that she compelled Nat Rider to put the pistol in his own pocket by her commanding gestures.

And now she had made Nat an accessory in the felony, or whatever it was. Only one thing could have been more odious to him than what was going on and that would be to refuse his connivance.

Anneke tried to persuade the officer to dance with some of the other girls, but they were afraid and Samson was infatuated with his Delilah. He would have no other.

Nat saw that the drunken beast was growing amorous and, remembering how Anneke had greeted his own impulsive embrace in the ocean, marveled that she could endure the touch of this plebeian brute.

But the affair went on and on until at last the officer was unable to stand at all. Then she steered the wobbling bulk to a divan and stretched him out. When he would not release her she sat by him until he fell asleep.

Then she subtly disengaged his arms from about her, mopped the sweat from her brow, and muttered what sounded to Nat like:

"Crisis!"

She was probably referring to what she had passed through.

"And now what?" said the host.

"Phone for a taxi," said Anneke.

When it arrived, she superintended the transfer of the officer to it. Nat carried the front end of him and helped to prop him in his seat. Anneke borrowed from Nat money enough to buy the driver, whom she ordered to find out the officer's home address from the police-station by telephone without telling all he knew, and to deliver the remains to the wife and kiddies. She ordered Tom Medlicote to follow on the officer's motor-cycle.

Her last deed was to take the pistol from Nat and stuff it into the yawning holster, "to save the poor wreck from getting into trouble."

When the taxicab and the motor-cycle had gone, Anneke was still unsated. She said:

"Let's all go down to the beach for a moonlight swim while I cool off my poor feet. The heavy hoofs of that cop have broken down every arch I have."

There was a groan of protest from the crowd. Everybody but Anneke was in a state of prostration from the strain and the host was frankly eager to clear the premises. He wanted to be able to sign an affidavit, if necessary, that there had been nobody at his house all evening.

With a sigh of disappointment Anneke ordered Nat to take her home.

All the way back she kept up a rattle of chatter and let him think that the liquor she had shared with the policeman had befuddled her even more than it had. Her farewell at the door was a mere "Toodly-oo!"

Even Romeo would have been staggered if Juliet had greeted him with a "Toodly-oo!"

Resolved that he would give her up as a hopeless job, Nat wandered about the next day lonelier than a preacher at a carnival.

As the sailor ashore from a long cruise rents a boat to while away the time, as the worn-out movie actor goes to a movie, and the saddle-scarred cowboy spends his day in town on the wooden horses of a merry-go-round, so Nat, for lack of other diversion, sought out the hack driver of a rickety old airship, a man who picked up odd five-dollar bills giving thrills to

people belated enough to be taking their first flights.

Nat rented the shabby plane and went up in it for a spin. It gave him more thrills than it could have furnished to any ignoramus, for only an expert could know how dangerous it really was. He expected it to go to pieces beneath him like the "one-hoss shay," but to his surprise it held together and he managed to land alive.

He was just advising the owner to patch it up with a dab of mucilage and a piece of twine when Anneke and her personal mob descended upon him. Anneke was all aglow.

"Nat, darling, you've given me the only inspiration I ever had. I've just invented what's going to be the new sport of kinks. I'm going to fly over to Cuba for my cocktail and fly back for dinner. Isn't it an exquisite thought? Don't you just love it?"

He could find no comment withering enough for the first boast he had ever heard her utter.

"You don't seem to get the whole beauty of it, old sea-gull," she said. "Perhaps you don't realize that it's you that inspired it, and I'm going to let you fly to Cuba with me."

"What in?" he mumbled.

"In this dear little gondola that you've just been tooling about so gracefully."

"Not me, not in this broken-down sewing-machine," he laughed. "It's dangerous."

"Oh!" she said, putting an incredible amount of scorn into so mild a word. "Then don't you dream of risking your swanlike neck."

"I don't intend to."

"That's fine. You're sure you won't be using the plane?"

"Never again."

"All right, Tom; then you can take me."

"What?"

"The minute my grand idea struck me, Tom offered to steer the boat, but I said you had first rights to the scheme. Since you are so—so discreet and wise and all, I'm going with Tom. His neck doesn't matter, so he's not so careful of it."

Nat glared at Medlicote, who had also been an aviator in the war, and a hero, too. There had been so many heroes that they enjoyed no benefit of valor, especially in each other's eyes; and Nat despised Medlicote all the more for being an imperfect villian marred by the courage that belonged only to virtuous men.

Nat spoke coldly: "You don't go with Medlicote, and you don't go at all."

"Oh, don't I?" said Anneke. "I know you own the earth but when did you buy the sky?"

"It's dangerous, I tell you."

"That's where the fun comes in," said Anneke. "Life's too short to stick to a life-preserver all the time. Tom's a flying fool."

Nat took refuge in his superior size. "If Medlicote tries to take you, he'll never leave the ground."

Medlicote prepared to dispute the matter, but Anneke pushed him back and mocked:

"How you heroes love one another! But don't you think for one moment, Mr. Safety First, that I'm going to abandon the only inspiration I ever had. If you're too old to fly, the man who owns this ship will take me over, won't you?"

"Sure, Miss, I can swim."

"If you go at all, you go with me," said Nat. He would have kidnaped her now rather than let anybody else risk death with her. Her madness was contagious and he resolved to carry her to Havana and back if he had to hold the machine to its task by sheer will-power.

"That's more like my heroic hero," said Anneke. "I'm ready when you are, and we'd better be off if we're to be back for dinner."

She borrowed a warm coat and a helmet from the owner of the old bus, and while Nat saw to the gas, the oil and the water, and tested the struts, the propellers and the engine as best he could, Anneke made sure of her cigarettes and her flask.

They took off in an ominous mussy way with the engine balking and stuttering. No barnyard fowl ever sailed across a fence with less grace.

But, once aloft, the engine displayed a smooth angelic eagerness that should have warned Nat that it was the old bird's swansong. He thought, instead, how strangely pleasant it was to be alone with Anneke, far from her madding crowd and the earthy corruptions that spoiled her soul. He could not tell her what was in his mind, but his heart was like an eagle's, and he wished that he might mount on up and up beyond the air into the ether and beyond that to some bright landing place on the Milky Way. If Anneke could never see her muddy companions again, he felt that she could be purified by some sky-change, and they could

be happy together with a prosperity impossible on this ruinous planet.

Anneke pretended to be delighting in the earth beneath, the slow passage of the long golden strand of beach between the green sea of the palms and the foaming silver fringe of the vast Atlantic blue. But her heart was really busy with pride in her companion. She had mastered him and was content, satisfied with her triumph and meek as any other conqueror. She, too, would have been glad of an ethereal honeymoon, where she could be herself and not have to war with the slave-drivers and the critics whom she had to insult to prove her precious independence.

She watched the countless islets of the Florida Keys slip in far under the keel of the airship like a flotilla of moored seacraft. She was shrieking that she would love to land on one of them when she got her wish.

Abruptly the engine died. The slow relentless laws of gravity caught up with it and took possession of it, hurled it whirling back to the earth. While Nat worked with a grim frenzy at the dead stick and all the complex machinery, Anneke gazed blankly at the ocean leaping toward her in a vast billow. The tufts of land

just beneath swelled with an idiot effect of inflating balloons.

They had climbed so high that in the long, long fall she had time to reproach herself for the destruction of this admirable gentleman whom she had teased to a fool's finish. He turned to see how she was taking her death, and through their goggles their eyes exchanges grotesquely monstrous incomprehensible messages before he turned back to cut off the gas switches to prevent a blaze.

Suddenly he felt her clutch upon him and seemed to understand that she was not afraid for herself but for him. She wanted to shelter him in some way! to break his fall as best she could with her own frail body!

That infuriated him and they were fighting when they struck with a crash and a splash like the end of the world.

Successive buckets of water thrown up into Anneke's face by the marching breakers woke her from coma. The agony of her first breath convinced her that she had cracked more than one rib. Blood was streaming from under her helmet and the arm that had crowded Nat's head into her shallow bosom was a livid mass; but his beautiful face was not marred. His

body, though, was hideously contorted, his limbs bent every which way with the proof of a dozen shattered bones.

Anneke dragged her own battered members from about him, with many a sharp cry and every oath she knew. Before she had extricated herself from all the entanglements she had lost her shoes, most of her skirt and great shreds of skin and stockings glued together.

Her pain-dreary eyes saw that the lazily rolling waves moved up to a mere punctuation point of sand.

Aching, bleeding, panting, cursing, she attacked the shattered air scow and pulled and pushed, hoisted and wrenched, twisted and untwisted wires, and managed to disentangle Nat as far down as the waist before he came back to life faintly damning the dog's breed that was mauling him.

When he saw who it was and what a wreck she was, he fainted and from far off heard her shrieking at him, as in a dream:

"Oh, Nat, Nat, for the love of heaven, swear at me some more!"

He came back with a wry green smile that broke her to tears. They tasted mighty good on his lips. They proved that she was human

and also what he wanted her to be, woman. When he was awake enough to wonder at her being alive and to be able to pour out sympathy for her wounds, she glibly denied that she had any except a few undeniable scratches.

It was not easy to conceal the fractured ribs, for groans came up automatically when she took a deep breath, but she disguised the wails in profanity and he was too far gone to suspect. What she said to her whisky flask when she found it a mess of wet splintered glass would have scared a mule-driver.

Between swoons Nat was able to help her with directions as to the next thing to lift for his release. Now and then she had to work under water. Now and then to climb far out on teetering wreckage. The hot sun was a crimson blur on the horizon before he was freed from the teeth of the trap, but he was unable to move either legs or arms, so she half swam with him, half towed him through red-tinted waters to red-tinted sands.

The only lucky break they had was the fact that the tide was high, for it was ghastly work dragging his limp body beyond the mark. Yet she achieved it.

She made tourniquets with a skill she had

learned years before in a girls' camp. She bound him up and patched him up and made driftwood splints with all the wisdom she had or could glean from him.

She was quite convinced that he was going to live when suddenly the hot sun was gone, the air went cool, then black and bleak.

Her man began to mumble through his chattering teeth. "I'm cold. I'm mighty cold. Ugh, but I'm very cold."

A terror that she had never known congealed her heart and threw her into a panic of desperation. She whipped off her heavy coat and tucked it about him. Still he shivered and turned blue. She whipped her tattered dress off over her head and wrapped it about his quaking legs. She peeled off her bloomers, and what was left of her stockings and slipped his pitiful cold hands into them. In her frenzy she unbound her filmy brassière and wound it about his throat. And that was all there was.

For the first time she wished that she had been voluminously enveloped as a Godey's lady with enough flannel petticoats to smother a polar bear. But a Godey's lady would never have gone sky-riding without a chaperon and

A First National Picture. *The Patent Leather Kid.*

CONSCRIPTION CAME AND CURLY FOUND HIMSELF, UNWILLINGLY, IN THE DRAFT.

would rather have let the world perish than her own modesty.

Poor Anneke had neither modesty nor petticoats, so she began to cast about for fuel. Finding her cigarette-lighter working for once, she succeeded in starting a blaze. But she could not keep Nat warm without setting him on fire, so she dug with her torn fingers a ditch in the sand and eased him into it beneath the wind.

He ceased to shiver and lay so still that she longed for him to say "I'm cold" again. All night she kept running to and fro for fresh wood. The ocean was morbid and the palm-depths full of mysterious terrors. Every bit of driftwood was farther than the last and she sang ditties from musical comedies to jazz away the horrors from her heart at least.

Breathing was pain and motion was like being broken on the rack, but it was better to hurt than to accept the peace of death, and she hobbled through dance steps.

Nobody protested, least of all Nat Rider. She bent down and shrieked at him.

He slept on. At least she hoped that it was sleep.

She forbore smoking in a superstitious feel-

ing that that might appease him, though her one prayer of thanksgiving had been uttered when she found that her cigarettes were safe and dry in their waterproof case.

Toward the last of the black hours a vicious inky gale swept over the island with such bitter froth from the waves that she burrowed in the sand on the windward side of Nat and shielded him as best she could with her own congealing flesh.

The first ironic roses in the east gave their own color to her snow-cold body whipped with the driven sand. She was wakened by Nat's delirious mutterings. Thinking himself back in one of the hospitals, where he had spent many a weary war-month, he was babbling:

"Nurse, if I could only smoke! Oh, if I could only have a smoke!"

Anneke flung off the sand that was her only blanket, fumbled in her coat where it lay about him found a cigarette and her lighter, sheltered the flame in her icy bosom and her bleeding hands until it caught. Then she set the cigarette in his bruised mouth.

Still thinking himself in France, he drank deep of the mystic solace of warm smoke in agonizing lungs, and laughed pathetically.

"It's a good thing the Anti-Cigarette League never got to France, eh?"

"A good thing, son," said Anneke.

"What an angel you are, Nurse!"

Anneke damned the unknown angel with a jealousy she had never felt for anyone else; but her hatred was for the woman, not the man. She watched the cigarette as if it were an altar fire, shook off the ashes when the need arose and put it back, feeling a vicarious comfort she had never taken in smoke before.

When the first cigarette was a stub too short for another puff, Nat sighed:

"Nurse, that tastes like—more!"

One after one she lighted her stock for him, and shook off the ashes as they grew. Only a devout smoker could understand the mingled bliss and anguish she had from the sacrifice. She watched the last one with a miser's dread, but he fell asleep with half of it unfinished. She put it out with care, against his further need, and stowed it cautiously in a pocket of her coat still spread across him. Then she fell back fainting in her little ditch.

She had a nightmare of a rattling airship falling, falling into roaring breakers. The dream was inspired by the arrival of the sea-

plane that had carried her father all night in a vain search of the myriad keys.

The drifting débris of Nat's airship marked the place of the disaster, and old Caldwell Jones leaped into the surf from his own plane and was carried sprawling ashore.

On all fours he studied the bloody traces of Anneke's wanderings. They led him toward two mounds of sand that might have been graves. Two faces were visible. He marveled that the man's set features were almost lost in the heap of sand-strewn clothes that covered him. On top of the heap were the light draperies that a girl would wear. Close to Nat Rider's leather-helmeted head was a littler one with blood matting the close-cropped hair. The cameo face of Anneke was criss-crossed with cuts till her father could hardly know her for his child. One swollen arm all black and blue clasped the body of Nat Rider.

Her father's cry of terror woke her. She opened her eyes, blinked in the level sunbeams, tried to smile, found it too painful, swept away her sole garment of sand, and sat up like a half-awakened child. But the effort wrung a wail of anguish from her snapped ribs, and from habit she changed it to an oath. Then she

stretched out a pleading palm and moaned with a babyish petulance.

"For Crisis' sake, give me a cigarette."

Her father saw only that her hand was torn and that the pit of sand where she had lain was red with her blood.

Nat's injuries were even more serious than Anneke feared, for when the surgeon had almost suffocated him in bandages he kept babbling, "Marry me, Anneke! Marry me, or I don't want to live." She would have promised him anything to get him well. But he never got entirely well, for, even when his scars were healed and his bones mended, he insisted on the wedding.

She humored him even in that, but it embarrassed her horribly when he would explain to her indulgent, if incredulous, friends that Anneke Janneke Jones was the wisest, bravest, noblest woman that ever blessed the earth, and all her ways were perfect. She would blush at that who never blushed at anything else, and try to squirm out of it by saying:

"You see the poor Humpty fell on his head, and he's been addled ever since."

He never lets her light her cigarette if he is

within reach of her, as he usually is, but always has another one ready for her before the last is finished. He won't even take a puff of it, remembering what she once did for him.

And he hands it to her as if it were a lighted candle offered to a saint. Her father feels, from the look in his eyes, that Nat will still be keeping up his priestly office when Anneke is as old as her mother is now. And her mother wonders if she is too old to learn to smoke.

Obscurity

The trains came. The trains went. But they always left her there in Catusville.

As they trickled through the western sky she could see them from the kitchen window where she was always washing the dirty dishes. When she carried the slops to the back yard to throw them to the hogs, she could see the trains vanish through the cut in Pomerey hill. If she waited a little they would appear again far off and pierce the bridge over Catus Creek. The smoke fluttered through the iron girders and waved her good-by tauntingly.

The trains going West simply reversed the program, but she did not care much for the west-bound trains, though she would have gone gladly almost anywhere to get out of Catusville. It was for the East that her heart hankered; for New York, and swell clothes and the lively life, money and men and shiny women to rival.

She was so forlornly mad to travel that she hated all the trains and all the people on them

for always leaving her there in Catusville.

There was nothing holding her where she was except what holds a freight car on a track or a stalled automobile on the road. She had no power to start. She could have run off and nobody would have stopped her or gone after her. She would have committed any crime to get away. But she could not find the crime to commit—as yet.

Her mother nagged her all the time, about every little thing:

"You're jest nachelly born lazy. You got no gumption at tall, no more git-up-and-git than what that old sow has."

"Well, whose fault is that? I'd like to know," she would answer. "You and Paw ain't went so darned far your own se'ves. And as for the old sow, I s'pose she'd like to 'foller the swaller back home,' but she can't grow wings from just wishin' any more'n I can. She's got to waller and take her swill just like I got to, I guess. But just you wait. Some of these days I'll turn up missin'. You'll see!"

She had no gifts, no beauty, no brains. She might have been pretty if she had thought pretty thoughts or had pretty clothes or a graceful carriage. But she slouched and

slumped all the time, and could not even dance. Her brother put it gracefully:

"Your feet ain't mates. You interfere. You'd ought to wear pads on your fetlocks."

"Aw, you think you're funny, don't you. Well, you know what you can do."

She was not even gifted in self-defense. She was not gifted in anything. Even her name was ugly: Hattie Pugmire. Her family called her "Hat" and her friends called her "Puggy."

She had a hundred resentments against the world, and none of them without reason. The town she was doomed to was one of the stupidest in the world. Its inhabitants praised it for its fine schools and the high moral character of its citizens; but the schools were considered fine because nobody knew any better, and if the inhabitants were moral it was because they had little opportunity to be what the inhabitants would have called "immoral." Immorality, in their lexicon, was practically impossible except to wealthy denizens of great cities.

Of the sordid, squalid vices, Catusville had no lack, and there were few things ugly that were unknown to the citizens.

To be immoral, in the Catusville sense, one

had to leave town. Millie Applegate had been immoral, for instance. She was beautiful and graceful and she vanished with a sleek and bayrummy drummer only to reappear as one of the most dazzling and nudest showgirls of a New York revue.

People spoke of her with disgust until she sued a wealthy manufacturer of temperance drinks for two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for seduction and breach of promise. Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars would have bought all Catusville, and most of the inhabitants admitted that they would have done almost any given thing for that sum also given. So Catusville was suddenly proud of Millie, and her heartbroken mother went about with her head lifted and that catty after-eating-the-canary look on her face.

The soft drink magnate answered Millie's claims by alleging that he was several years too late in meeting her to have been guilty of seducing her, and that she could hardly allege breach of promise, as Millie knew that he was married all the time while he was—the word he used was "befriending"—her.

The trial filled a dull season in the newspapers and the town found itself in the head-

lines, thanks to Millie, who was called "the Catusville Cutie."

Children asked their mothers what it was all about and were properly squelched. Hattie Pugmire read every line she could pick up while the trial was going on. She read so assiduously that one of her so-to-speak suitors called her a gol-durn bookworm. Which was not original but was better than the "hookworm" her people called her.

Millie announced in court that she had only one reason for demanding the "heart balm" in cash, and that was in order to obtain enough money to pay off the mortgage on her mother's farm so that she could hide her broken life in the sweet calm of home.

Hattie nearly laughed her head off at the picture of Millie Applegate spending any time at home or any money on that "farm." But she watched for the jury's verdict with breathless interest.

The jury could not have believed in Millie's innocence, but, like every other good honest red-blooded hundred per cent American jury, it believed that any man with money was guilty of something that ought to be heavily fined. So a verdict was brought in to the effect that

the soda-popper had damaged Millie to the extent of twenty-five thousand dollars—an amount of damages which, according to the town philosopher, was more than ten freight trains could have done to her if they had run over her twice a day for a week.

Still, twenty-five thousand dollars was a heap of money, and Catusville longed to welcome Millie home. But she never came.

How many girls in America that verdict seduced, it would be impossible to compute. Certainly there were few girls in Catusville who did not wonder how one went about meeting manufacturers of soft drinks. Certainly the papers were always celebrating the successful raids of otherwise talentless women upon men of wealth. They came and went eternally like shooting stars, leaving a bright streak across the dark and then vanishing.

As for Hat Pugmire, she was frantic for somebody to lift her out of the dark. Just to get her name in the papers would be even better than the money. Money meant nothing to her. She had never had any. But to have an exciting love affair with somebody who was swell—to enjoy a great dramatic crash and get into the headlines! Gosh, what luck!

She had an appetite for gloom, for melodrama, for tragedy, the appetite that leads multitudes to pay high prices to be made to weep or to be thrilled with horror or fascinated above all by a gorgeous sin and its brilliant punishment. Hat wanted to experience something grand before she died. The horror of oblivion living and dead was like a nightmare of smothering ghastliness. Her ambitions were cheap because she was ignorant, but they were all the fiercer for their limitations.

The trains that came and went were, in her eyes, loaded with magnates and Millies, and her longing to be one of the latter grew to a frenzy. She had everything but the ability to get up and get.

But opportunity for evil comes also to her who sits and waits.

II

There was one other product of Catusville who had achieved fame—a politician of national power. Some called him a statesman; some called him a fool and a crook. Some said he should, and would, be president of the United States; some said he should, and would, end his days in the penitentiary. The same

things were said of him that have been said of almost all the other great statesmen as well as the eminent criminals.

Cass Pomeroy had the gift, or the curse, of making people either love him or hate him. Nobody seemed able to think him an average man and let him go with liking or disagreeing.

He enjoyed his fame in a way, but it had its hardships, too. There were times when his back nearly broke under the burden of his responsibilities, for everything he did or said had its effect on the hopes of his party. There were times when the fierce white light of everlasting publicity filled him with a positive agony such as a motion picture actor incurs when prolonged exposure to the arc lights gives him "Klieg eyes."

On these occasions Pomeroy had to flee from the public gaze or die of eyes. He would go duck shooting, bear hunting, fishing, and disappear utterly for a few days or weeks. His enemies said that this hiding-out was simply a blind for a big long drunk. His friends denied it.

Such citizens of Catusville as remembered him believed the worst. When he lost an elec-

tion, they said he always was no good. They said, "I told you so!" When he won an election, they said that Catusville was noted for the products of its fine schools. They said, "I told you so!"

He had not been seen in his native town for nearly twenty years. He had gone East and grown up with the country. And now he was the leading candidate for the senate from that Eastern state of which he had been governor. If he won this election, his friends and his enemies agreed that after a term or two he would be the logical candidate for the presidency.

Pomeroy had married East and the town had never seen his wife or his children. The younger generation of Catusvillains knew nothing of him except as a vague figure in the newspapers. His name was the same as the name of the big hill split by the railroad tracks.

They did not know that Pomeroy's ancestors had been among the founders of the town. They had not founded much, but they had not lived to know how little.

Somehow the remembrance of Catusville and his boyhood there smote Cass Pomeroy's heart at a time when he was on the edge of one of

his breakdowns and experience warned him to escape into obscurity.

Talking with a few cronies over good fishing grounds, the haunts of yellowtail, trout and muscallonge, he was moved to say:

"I've fished over most of the waters of this country. I've seen the tarpon turn somersaults and I've had the swordfish haul me out to sea in a squall and I've sneaked up on some old trout as if he were a rattlesnake, but I've never had the fun I had when I was a boy and I fished in old Catusville creek."

"What did you catch?"

"Only the fish you'd throw back now, perch and catfish and pike, but—I wish I could go back."

"You'd have to go back to boyhood, too, to enjoy it."

"I suppose so, but I could remember, and be quiet, and nobody would watch me. By God, I'm going back all by myself."

They did not laugh at him, for they knew what too much publicity means, but they prophesied the failure of his dreams. They prophesied everything except that the fugitive from publicity should encounter a mania for it.

A First National Picture. *The Patent Leather Kid.*

A NEW LANGUAGE, BUT THE SAME OLD MEANING.

It was in all the papers that Millie Applegate would come home to Catusville. She did not come. Nobody knew that Cass Pomeroy was coming till he had been there a day or two. He did not bring his family. They never went with him on his retreats. But he went to live with a cranky old bachelor uncle, a hermit who still occupied the Pomeroy farmhouse and had let it run down with himself.

There was a stir in the town when the news leaked out. Pomeroy had made the local newspaper men promise not to publish the story or put it on the wires. But they had not promised not to mention it to their friends.

So Hat heard of the newcomer. She learned the amazing fact that he purposely sought obscurity, that he had a hard time finding it, since the spotlight followed him everywhere he went. The photographers would probably hear of his visit before long and come down to take movin' pitchers of him.

Cass Pomeroy simply could not keep out of the papers. And Hat simply could not get into them.

Their meeting would make an interesting event—for Hat.

She was as lazy as ever except in her sleep-

less ambition. She wondered if the Lord had not sent the great Mr. Pomeroy, Hon. Cass Pomeroy, to Catusville just to rescue her.

Her first thought was how to meet him—not just to shake hands with him—invade his house and invite him to dinners and parties as some of the townspeople made haste to do—and were pathetically snubbed for their pains.

Hat wanted to know him, to beg him to take her with him as his—as his what? She could could not be a typewriter or stenog'apher. She could not be a sec'etary. He probably did not carry a maid and she neither was nor could be one for his sake. She could imagine nothing that she could suggest to him as an excuse. Perhaps if she just begged him for money to take her to the city—no, he wouldn't give it even if she asked it. And why should he pass out cash to her when she didn't know what she could do when she got to the city.

Compared to Hat, Millie Applegate was a great artist, a classic siren, a lady of culture. Millie talked Broadway, dressed Broadway, thought Broadway. She was her money's worth to visiting plutocrats from the smaller cities.

But poor Hat was nothing, nobody, and knew

it. Yet was none the less rebellious for being ditched in life.

Something told her that the Hon. Pomeroy was her first and last chance to be pulled out of the ditch. Somehow she must fasten herself on him and rise with him out of the depths of murk into the glory of the glarelight.

Her plots and plans occupied her days and nights. She washed them with the dishes, threw them out with the slops, preserved a thought here, a scheme there, like sunflower seeds or bright pebbles picked up in the path.

She listened to all she could hear about him from the family and the casual visitors who told what was told about him at the postoffice and in the drug store. She learned that he got up before daybreak and dug fishin' worms and took them in an old tomater can and cut his own fishin' pole and fished with hooks he had sent to the hardware store for.

Hardly anybody had seen him fish except a few boys who roved the woods and a farmer or two in search of stray cattle. He fished by the wide bay in the creek which had once been the old swimmin' hole before boys got automobiles and fancy notions and did all their swimmin' in the Y. M. C. A. pool.

Hat remembered the place. She had wandered there often. The creek twisted and turned like it was writing its own name in the deep woods. There used to be an old dead tree that had fallen across and formed a bridge from bank to bank.

Children dared each other to cross it and Hat had fallen in once and would have drowned if somebody's hired man hadn't pulled her out. She had learned to swim there a little after that, her bathing suit an old gingham dress.

The picture came back to her of how she had lost her balance as she crossed the old tree bridge, had slipped, shrieked, clutched, struck the water with a splash, swallowed a lot of it as she yelped, and had been carried along on the current to where a big hired man had come loping through the woods at the howls of the other children and waded in up to his waist, dragged her out, and run with her to the nearest farmhouse where they had rolled her on a barrel and almost yanked her tongue out until she came to.

Recalling this, while she stood wide-eyed, washing the dishes in the scalding water, she saw Hon. Pomeroy, instead of the hired man, dashing to her rescue, carrying her out of the

creek, and (like the beautiful heir in all the stories she had read) marrying her.

Hon. Pomeroy was not beautiful and he was already married, but—well, so was the soft drink man. Yet he had loved Millie Applegate well enough to spend a lot of money on her and join her in the papers. Millie was the Catusville Cutie and the man was her soda-popper and they were known everywhere and Millie must have had a swell time before he chucked her, and the chucking cost him good and plenty.

Through Hat's reverie ran a train from the West. It broke through the hills where the track came down like a creek, flowed through the town and on East to the big cities.

Some day a train must take her East. She saw herself on board, and at her side paying her fare was—Hon. Pomeroy. And she was all dressed up.

Hat had had her affairs, cheap ones, brief ones, without poetry or grace; but she had learned the magic of contact, the astounding power she gained over certain men by leaning against them, snuggling up to them, looking up to them with eyes full of that hungry, helpless look. That hired man who rescued her from drowning when she was a little girl had come

to see her and had hung round her till her Paw promised to shoot him.

Perhaps if she could once get into the arms of Hon. Pomeroy, the spell would work with him, too. He was a famous man, but lots of folks said he was a bad man and crooked as they make 'em. Well, what of it, he was rich and famous and he lived in the newspapers.

III

It was easy enough for Hat to leave the house. It always had been. Nobody could stop her, though they might raise a row afterwards because dinner or supper was late or the dishes left unwashed.

Her mother luckily got right sick and had to stay in bed till her rheumatism wore off. So one morning bright and early Hat left the breakfast dishes in the sink and sneaked down the kitchen steps, out through the back yard past the pigs that greeted her vainly with their "oo-ich, oo-ich!" which means, "I'm hungry. Wait on me!" But she sneered at them and passed by. Her pig-feeding days were about over.

She climbed the fence and struck across a scale-infested orchard and across a dusty road

and down through Winan's pasture, where the cows would have scared her from any less important mission.

She made her way through the big woods to the creek. It was singing away like all get-out and the fish were shooting out of it just to hear themselves flop.

Hat crept up like an Indian toward the old swimming hole, slipping from tree to tree until she came near enough to see if Hon. Pomeroy were at his post.

There he was, lazing away, smoking a pipe and dozing over his fishing pole braced so that he didn't even have to hold it. It looked like he had been reading a book, for there was a flutter of pages in the moss about the arm-chair roots of the old tree. The breeze was fluttering the hair on his bare head, too, and playing with the pipe smoke. It was a mighty nice day and he looked like a mighty nice man.

He was thanking God for perfect peace in a sinless world. If he had seen Hat, he would have felt sorry for her, instead of for himself. She looked less like a fiend of ruin than anything else in the world.

She made a wide circuit and reached the

tree-bridge unbeknownst to Pomeroy. The tree was pretty old now and rains and snows had gnawed it till it looked pretty shaky for a traveler of Hat's heft.

She was afraid to try it, and hung back, dubious of her scheme. What if Hon. Pomeroy should not hear her when she screamed? What if she fell into that eddying, wimpling stream and it swept her past him before he could get to her? What if he just stared at her, scared-like, till it was too late and she was drownded?

Better to live on unknown in Catusville, than to die so young in Catusville Creek.

Her hopes slumped and she gave up her dream, set out for home again. But her feet lagged. The thought of the same old drudgery forever and ever—dish-washing and lugging swill to swine—bandying jokes, and spooning with hired men—it was unbearable.

Better take a chance on being drowned in the creek than lose her first and last chance at money and fame. Why should Millie Applegate get all the glory?

There was that motto in the copy book: "Nothing venture, nothing gain." She ought to remember that. She had had to copy it one

hundred times once because the teacher had caught her kissing one of the boys back of the wood shed.

What the copy book said must be right, and Hat resolved to do or die, or both. She whirled, dashed back, and started across the bridge on the run. It felt awful soft and rotten under her feet, and gave out a crackling, dull, crumbling sound. She whirled to regain the bank, but the log went to dust and rags beneath her, and she plunged through a cloud of wood-pulp to the stream.

There was sincerity in her piercing cry of terror.

Cass Pomeroy, wakened from his beatitude, saw, vaguely through a network of leaves and saplings, the log bridge going to pieces and something like a girl tumbling with it. He sat up, dropped to the water's edge, and stared at the bruised and half-unconscious girl whom the waters rolled over and over.

He strode out into the stream, struck a step-off, sank, swam, found bottom, stumbled forward to the deeper water. He was in well above his waist when Hat's body smote him in the chest. Her arms wildly clenched him, but not at all as she had foreseen it. She was al-

most scared to death. What wits she had were all awry.

The creek was deathly cold. It made her sick to her stomach.

Gathering her in as best he could, Cass Pomeroy began to press toward the shore. While Hat was in the water, she was light as a feather; but as he came out and clambered up the bank she grew suddenly lead.

He just barely made the top of the mud-shelf in time to spill her on the moss. He went to his knees panting, wondering if his heart were going to knock a hole through his ribs.

He could not lift his head to breathe, for Hat kept her hands clenched about his neck. He could not help staring in her face, and since he had put away his reading glasses, he saw her in a blur that helped her; veiled the crudities of her features mercifully.

She had all the beauty of young womanhood in terror and in sleep. Her body was young, too, and the scant dress she had selected for her little drama was hardly more than another skin, a flowered calico skin that was quaintly eerie and impossible, almost legendary.

While he struggled to unclasp her hands her eyes came open, her lips parted, she sighed.

She had taken time to remember the lines she had rehearsed for his benefit:

"How brave you are! You saved my life! I—I guess I belong to you."

This woke the Hon. Cass Pomeroy from mythology to crass realism. He was a politician not a poet. He had not come down here to collect young nymphs as property, and as responsibility. He had seen too many promising political careers wrecked upon the reef of affairs with women; he had long since forsworn romance except in books.

If he had had any affairs, no one knew of them but the sharers of them, and they must have been singularly discreet. The general belief was that he was what he pretended to be, a devoted, loyal husband and father.

His enemies had tried hard enough to fasten scandals upon him, but had never succeeded.

The moment Hat spoke, she put him to flight —spiritually, that is. But he could not get away physically. He was too humane to abandon a half-drowned girl to pneumonia. But he had no other than a samaritan interest in her.

Seeing that he was not at all infatuated, Hat feigned a swoon. She shivered, her teeth chat-

tered;—this was honest, for the creek was icy and the woods were dark.

Cass Pomeroy's humanity, no less than his discretion, told him that he could not let this young stranger die on his hands. He must carry her to the sunshine and to shelter.

He glanced back reluctantly to where his fishing pole was bobbing up and down.

Some poor fish was caught there on the disguised hook let down from the mysterious world above for its destruction. Pomeroy was tormented with a desire to see what he had caught. It never occurred to him that he was also the victim of a baited hook, a barbed hook which he would try in vain to escape.

If he had understood, he would have fled from the girl who sprawled at his feet and hid her fatal peril in a look of helplessness. Instead, he bent to lift her from the dank moss.

He could probably never have managed it if Hat had not helped him a little, surreptitiously. He got her up into his arms at last and staggered toward the edge of the woods, tripping over roots and taking a flogging from the branches that whipped his face. He was sure that he would die of a broken heart before

he reached the rim of the forest, but he made it.

The sunlight was grateful to Hat, but it revealed her to Pomeroy as less beautiful than in the twilight of the woods. Perhaps it was this realization that led him to halt, get her on her feet, and advise her that it was best for her to walk. When he saw that she could walk, and heard more of her embarrassing gratitude, he ordered her to run, and to run home, lest she catch her death of cold.

He said this in such a family doctor tone that even Hat could tell he was not at all bewitched. She tried the effect of proximity, toppled against him and stared up into his eyes. But she was all wet and not a little clammy, and he made it evident that he was not to be conquered at once.

Still, she had met him and she had a good excuse for meeting him again. So she thanked him with all her heart, praised him with all her vocabulary, and begged him not to tell on her, for fear her folks would punish her.

She tempted him with a vision of herself as a victim of persecution. But even that did not win him. He was beginning to feel the chill of his own immersion and the need of dry clothes. So he said:

"I promise not to tell. Better run along, child."

"This'll be just our secret, won't it?" she asked.

He nodded, and she turned homeward. The hot sun had dried her clothes before she reached there, and since she was not even suspected of a misadventure, she was left with a stock of unused lies.

But her mother put her to washing dishes once more, and keeping the pigs fed up. Her resentment smoldered and she cudgeled her slow brain for new devices.

The important thing was to get close to Cass Pomeroy again. It took her only a few hours of hard thinking to invent a new device.

After the midday dinner was cleared away, she vanished from the house and spent the afternoon picking blackberries and velvety raspberries. When the pail was full she marched along the road toward the old Pomeroy farm-house.

A lad going after the cows met her and asked her for some of her berries. She shook her head, saying:

"These are for the Hon. Pomeroy."

"D'he pay you to pick 'em?"

"No, these are a—a love-offering. We was in the woods together yestiddy and I fell in the crick and he saved my life."

"Aw, go on, you and old Pomeroy in the woods together!"

"I hope to swaller fishhooks if it ain't Gawd's truth. He was awful nice. I'm simpully crazy about him."

When the lad brought home the cows, he brought home the story that old Pomeroy was carrying on with Hat Pugmire. The original radio began to spread the news at once and it did not lose in the telling.

A man driving a load of hay and sharing the front seat with his wife, offered Hat a lift. The wife sampled the berries but Hat said they were not hers to give away. They belonged to Hon. Pomeroy, who had risked his life to save hers while they were fishing in Catus Creek. They didn't believe her and she asked them to go see the old bridge-tree if it hadn't fell down whilst she and Hon. Pomeroy were sitting on it. If he hadn't swam out with her, she'd have been a goner.

They stopped the wagon at the Pomeroy gate and let Hat down. They saw the Hon. Cass

Pomeroy himself in person smile and greet Hat when she approached him. They drove on and whipped up the horses to hasten the news.

A number of prominent citizens were calling upon Pomeroy when Hat arrived, and their eyes popped at what they heard and saw: Hat offered the berries to the statesman and explained:

"These are for savin' my life when we was in the woods together."

Pomeroy squirmed as he realized how the words must sound to the audience, but he could not deny their truth.

Hat lingered till the embarrassed visitors took themselves off. As they looked back they saw her sitting on the porch steps offering select berries to Pomeroy. They could not see how the girl's innocent forwardness embarrassed him.

By nightfall everybody in Catusville knew that Hat Pugmire and the great Pomeroy were on mysteriously good terms.

Pomeroy could not get rid of her till dusk and then she affected great terror of going home alone, and more terror of being late. There was nothing for Pomeroy to do but take

A First National Picture. *The Patent Leather Kid.*

KNEE DEEP IN THE FLOODED TRENCHES AT ZERO HOUR.

her with him when he drove in to town for a dinner he had tried in vain to dodge.

Several persons saw the two together and the news went about like fire in a wheatfield that Cass Pomeroy was buggy-riding with Hat Pugmire, and her sittin' mighty close to him.

But she insisted on his letting her out before they reached her home lest her family see them and start to abusing her.

That night Hat lay awake till all hours figuring how to advance her prospering schemes. Suddenly a great idea came to her: Since Cass Pomeroy loved fishing, she would take up fishing. Knowing that her brother Anson was going fishing the next day, she resolved upon an exceedingly bold step.

Rising very early she prepared for her brother a light breakfast of sausages and cakes, ham and eggs, potatoes, oatmeal, applesauce and coffee. As soon as he attacked it, she stole out of the kitchen, picked up Anse's can of fresh-culled worms and his pole and ran as fast as she could toward Catusville Creek.

There she found Cass Pomeroy reveling in the morning air and the zest of the world. He had felt it safe to return since the bridge was

gone now and no more wenches were likely to fall into the water.

To his stupefaction, Hat was suddenly standing by him. Her bare feet had brought her silently over the moss, and he could not help smiling at the eagerness in her eyes. He could not rebuke the blithe meekness of her prayer:

"Morning, Hon. Pomeroy, would you mind if I tried to ketch a few fish out of your crick?"

"It isn't my crick. Go as far as you like."

She dropped down at his side and prepared to bait her hook, but had some qualms about the messy process.

"Ooh! I hate to touch the poor worms," she said. Many ladies are like that—very tender of the feelings of the lower animals, but quite remorseless in the destruction of man.

Pomeroy laughed, took the can and the hook from her, and, with a fisherman's gentle fiendishness, impaled the poor worm on the steel in order to offer it another death in the jaws of a fish. Perhaps in that exhibition of cruelty he forfeited all rights to claim pity for his own approaching doom.

When he gave back the hook to Hat, she managed to touch and hold his hand with a

little confusion, and her gratitude was excessive.

She was so awkward in making the cast that she flipped his hat into the stream. She jumped for it and he had to laugh as she waded into the creek for it. He had to help her up the slippery bank, and when she reached the top she contrived to fall into his arms and knock him over backward.

They laughed uproariously at the mishap, but he was not a little shaken by the encounter. Hat was not pretty, but after all she was alive and young, and very woman.

Pomeroy was solemn for a while and Hat respected his silence, suspecting perhaps that the spell of her presence was not so dire a failure as before.

He was, indeed, in the desperate plight of a man finding himself alone with a woman who implies at the same time helplessness to resist and willingness for defeat. To be a Joseph and run away, is a kind of heroism that has always seemed somehow contemptible. Even Joseph became a byword as a sort of sublimated ninny.

Yet a man also abhors too much willingness in a woman, and Pomeroy was exceedingly

human. Otherwise he would not have been able to appeal to so large a mob of exceedingly human beings.

A man of loftier soul would have won few votes from the groundlings.

He realized, however, that the groundlings are also human enough to despise and destroy a leader who lets himself get caught. They punish the lack of skill under the guise of punishing the sin.

Poor Pomeroy was in a quandary. He needed the refreshment of the solitude. If he suffered himself to be driven away from this cool grotto in the woods where he had been able to loaf and invite his soul, he would have to return to the dull farmhouse, and stay there.

Why the devil had this little female devil chosen to inflict herself on him? She had already spoiled his yesterday, and his favorite rod had been yanked from its place and carried off down the creek by the lost fish, which must have been a prize catch.

And now she was back again, bare-headed, bare-armed, bare-legged, tanned and rough as a nymph would have been who dwelt with nature all her life. He could not help seeing her.

He saw her best when he kept his eyes off her. She was very pretty when he did not look at her.

She made little joyous noises of excitement, whispers, giggles, oohs and ahs, brook-like sounds.

Then she caught a fish and went into hysterics over it. He had to seize the rod and help her captive ashore. And when it came gleaming and flipping and swinging about their heads, she got herself all mixed up with him again, and, before he knew it, she was in his arms, leaning against him while he untwisted the hook from its gills and dropped it on the ground.

She did not leave his arms, but stared up and moaned:

"Ain't you wonderful? To think that I'm out here fishin' with the greatest man in America, Hon. Pomeroy!"

Can a man decently throw a fervent admirer out of his arms? Pomeroy laughed uncomfortably, yet not altogether uncomfortably, and wondered how in heaven he was to be rid of her, and was not quite sure that he wanted to be rid of her just yet.

She was evidently in no mood to move, for

she actually drew his arms tight about her as if she wished to reassure him that he had not offended her by his audacity! And she sighed:

"It's awful nice here, ain't it? You saved my life, too. If it hadn't been for you, I'd be dead today. And I never really thanked you!"

Before he could escape her, she flung her arms about his neck, drew his face to hers and kissed him again and again.

He was in an agony of confusion. To rebuff her gratitude, her innocent fervor, was beyond him. He was not immune to the thrill of tight arms and warm lips and the primeval persuasions of a deep forest solitude, a sunlit nook, and a breeze that was in itself an argument for all tenderness. Yet his honesty and his wisdom cried out to him, Begone!

To make his evasion the easier, he gave the girl a kindly hug, returned her kiss and made to put her away. As he looked past her shoulder, he almost died of chagrin, for he saw a young farmer staring at him from across the creek.

There was a grin on his face, and a look of sullen anger, too. Instead of confounding Pomeroy by open ridicule or insult, he darted

back into concealment and disappeared. Which confounded Pomeroy more.

He could not be sure whether the farmer was watching or had gone running to the village to announce that the great man was carrying on with a girl.

Disgust nauseated the victim of circumstances, and once more he disentangled himself from Hat's wiles and left her to her own devices.

He did not explain that they had been observed. He did not suspect that it was her brother, who had missed his fishing tackle and searched the banks of the creek for his thieving sister.

Behold, how all things work together for those who follow the devil. Hat had not been inspired to drag her brother into her plot, but when she reached home dejected at another failure, she found that she had triumphed.

Not only was the house buzzing with the flattering horror of Hat's affair with the great statesman; not only had the fast-flying wings of gossip carried the news from the village to the ears of the Pugmires; but her brother punched her in the eye for stealing his fishing rod. Then her mother slapped her down for

her bad conduct, and her father larruped her with a hickory switch for bringing more shame on the family name.

After the pain and humiliation of the triple beating had been assuaged a little, and before the welts on her back had subsided, Hat's tears were chased away by the realization that she had a perfect excuse for another visit to her victim.

She did not leave the house till after supper. Then she stole a horse from the barn and rode bareback across-country to the Pomeroy farm.

Arriving there, she found Pomeroy smoking on the porch steps alone, reveling in the moonlight. She flung herself from the horse and letting the reins fall to the ground, threw herself into the arms of the dumbfounded Pomeroy, sobbing:

"My folks have beat me almost to death for being out with you. Just look at what my father did to me."

And before he could stop her she had slipped one arm out of her waist and exposed the whip-marks across it. A stream of light from the hall-lamp made a warm glow about her and gilded her with a certain beauty.

But Pomeroy was wise enough, or virtuous

enough, to turn his eyes away; and kind enough to call the old woman who kept the house to do something for the poor child's wounds.

Hat went inside leaving Pomeroy in a swirl of emotions. For all his sympathy, he hated the girl who was plainly going to drive him out of his retreat and leave him the victim of hateful rumors in spite of all he could do.

With a sigh for the loss of his sorely needed vacation, he decided to pack up and go back to town or hunt seclusion elsewhere.

In the meanwhile, Hat was filling the ears of the old housekeeper with her own version of her devotion to Pomeroy and his great interest in her.

Worse yet, when her bruises were dressed, she flatly declined to go home. She said that her father would never let her in again, he would kill her if she came back. Pomeroy was almost ready to kill her if she did not leave.

He tried to find her horse, but the old nag had turned about and gone back to its old stall at top speed. Pomeroy offered to send her back in the buggy, but she would not leave, even when he rashly suggested that he would drive.

This tempted her, but she resisted the lure. She wept and pleaded so frantically that there was nothing to do but promise her shelter for the night.

When this was guaranteed, she became a contented child. She chattered away to Pomeroy and told of her ambitions to go to the city and become somebody. She had no chance in Catusville to be anything but a toadstool or a fungus growing on a dead stump.

The truth of this was undeniable, and Pomeroy, in a moment of dangerous liberality, said that he would help her to escape. He gave her a hundred dollars, nearly all the cash he had, and extracted from her a promise to leave the farm the next morning on the train. He advised her where to go in New York to find a respectable home and kindly people who would take care of her future, find work for her and shield her from evil.

Since she showed an inclination to talk all night and was still prattling away after the housekeeper and the farmer were in their beds, Pomeroy bade her a good night. She followed him up the steps and kissed him loudly.

When he closed his door on her great eyes, he took the precaution to lock it quietly.

At some mysterious hour he heard a tapping on his door and went to open it. There was Hat in one of the housekeeper's nightgowns, moaning:

"I'm awful scared. It's spooky in there."

He gave her a look of rage and contempt, and whispered:

"Go back to your room, you little beast!"

He closed the door against her and locked it. He remembered afterward that she made no further sound in the hall. He wondered if she had been heard tapping at his door.

She had.

At daybreak there was a great clatter in the yard. Pomeroy looked out of the window and saw three or four men on horseback and two in buggies. They saw him at the window and demanded that he come down.

He threw on a bathrobe and went to the front porch. One of the men announced that he was Hat's father and he had missed his daughter. The old horse had come home without her and a few friends had been searching for her everywhere. They had finally thought to come to him, since she had taken such a liking for him.

Pomeroy's scarlet rage looked like scarlet

guilt, and his hesitation over an answer confirmed his look. Before he could frame a reply, old Pugmire, glancing up, cried:

"There she is now, peekin' out of your winder."

And there she was. She had run in through his open door and made sure of her discovery.

When Pomeroy had closed his door in her face, he had turned her interest in him, whatever it may have been, to black rage. He had given her the final unforgivable insult, and she rejoiced now in the opportunity of crushing him and trampling him underfoot as she rose by his fall.

In the little posse that accompanied her father, was an ambitious young newspaper man, a correspondent of a national news service who had rarely anything to contribute. Now was his first chance to shine and he made the most of it. The fact that his people had always belonged to the political party that Pomeroy was always attacking, added to his sense of consecration.

When Hat had dressed and come down the stairs, she did and said nothing to clear Pomeroy of the charges against him. He was faint with wrath and helpless realization that any

reproach for her would rob him of his last shred of honor.

Pugmire, rising to glorious heights of parental majesty, announced that he was not only going to sue Pomeroy for damages, but have him arrested for his criminal treatment of the girl who was still so young that, according to the recent laws, Pomeroy would have been guilty of abduction even if he had married her.

When Mr. Pugmire dragged Hat into his buggy and drove off with her, she managed quite accidentally to disclose the hundred dollars and to let it be assumed that it was the price of her honor.

As the posse left the yard, Pomeroy turned to the farmer and the housekeeper. Before he could speak, the housekeeper gave him the look one usually saves for reptiles, and sneered:

"Such goin's-on under a respectable roof! Don't think I didn't hear you last night."

She entered the house and gave the door a slam that put a period to his welcome within.

Pomeroy turned to the farmer and smiled woefully:

"You don't believe any of this, do you, uncle?"

The farmer spat cynically and grumbled:

"Wall, I wisht you could have went somewheres else with your city ways."

Pomeroy shrugged his shoulders and was not fool enough to waste any of his famous eloquence on such partisans. His mind was in a swirl of dismay. He had seen so many eminent politicians and magnates brought tumbling from the heights to the depths of ignominy and, worse, of public ridicule by revealed entanglements with women.

When the women were young, the disgrace was worse. Nobody dared befriend the accused. Though the honesty and veracity of little women might be suspect in every other field, they had only to cry out against a man and he was damned without recourse.

Pomeroy had tried to rescue some of his friends in such cases, for the sake of the party if for no other reason. Once or twice the accused made frenzied protestations of innocence, but he had never been able to believe them. Knowing how honorably, mercifully, wisely, he had dealt with this peculiar little serpent who had fanged him for some unknown reason, Pomeroy could hardly believe his own innocence. He had had thoughts. He had hurled them from his soul with disdain, but

they had visited it. He was so distraught that he wondered if he had been really innocent.

His mind was like a mad dog's. He wanted to howl and rend everybody, everything in his unutterable misery, his insane panic.

He had to take himself by the throat almost to compel his reason to bestir itself for his rescue from complete disaster.

One thing was certain. If he went to Catusville to take the train, he would perhaps be mobbed, he would almost certainly be jailed. A village cell was a poor place to fight from.

He demanded that the farmer hitch up a buggy and drive him at once to the station beyond. And there he took the first train East. When he reached home, the first paper he bought had him in the headlines.

What followed is well known to those who read history in the daily chronicles. The warrant for his arrest, the efforts to extradite him, the hint that the poor victim of his guile was about to become a mother, the suit against him for three hundred thousand dollars for breach of promise; the announcement that his wife had sued him for divorce, and that his party had withdrawn all support from his reported candidacy—these and other things kept

him and Hat in the big type on the front pages.

Hard-headed friends who did not dare to defend him publicly, secretly advised him to make a cash settlement with the girl and drop out of the headlines for a time. When he pleaded with them to believe him innocent, they grinned and said, "Oh, of course!" And they thought they paid him the greater compliment after all; for, they argued, who wants to be a Joseph?

The cash settlement with Hattie cost him thirty thousand dollars. She was determined to beat Millie Applegate's record at least.

The cash settlement with Mrs. Pomeroy and the costs of the divorce made still heavier inroads in Pomeroy's life savings. He was a poor man when he was released from all his earthly ties, and was forced to begin life over again as a broker on a commission basis.

This the public does not know, for the papers had long since tired of him and of Hattie Pugmire. They did not even report the dramatic climax in which she collected her money and gave her father the laugh when he asked her to hand it over to him. When he begged for enough to pay off the inevitable mortgage, she

A First National Picture. *The Patent Leather Kid.*

THE BATTALION ADVANCED OVER TERRITORY TOTALLY DEVASTATED.

gave him "the merry ha-ha!" When he implored her to come home and live with the folks that loved her, she tossed him a hundred dollars and said:

"You can git a neleckric dishwasher for that. And you can whip it all you want. Ta-ta, darling!"

She went to New York and cannily invested the fortune she had so cannily earned. Most wisely she invested a deal of it in beauty parlors and dressmakers' wares and in education of a sort.

In fact, she became the silent partner in a barber shop for ladies and learned the profession of manicuring, which opened numberless avenues to wealth and perhaps to a golden marriage.

One day, her five hundredth customer turned out to be—as she would have said, "none other than Hon. Pomeroy." "Dishonorable Pomeroy" was his name on other lips, but to her he was always "Hon."

She recognized him at once, but he never dreamed that the glossy doll manipulating his fingers with such delicate impersonality was the engine of his ruin. She was finishing his other hand before she disclosed herself.

Then she fell back into her old Catusville voice and murmured:

"Morning, Hon. Pomeroy, would you mind if I ketched a few fish out of your crick."

He started so that the curved scissors snipped off a morsel of flesh. But he did not notice that in his amazement. As he stared at her, she laughed:

"Yes, it's me. Hat Pugmire as was. Madumselle Arlette as is."

His eyes flashed with rage, then dulled, and his head sank like Samson's when his hair was gone and he looked stupidly at Delilah with the shears. Like the bewildered Samson he mumbled:

"Why did you do it? What harm had I ever done to you?"

Hattie reared up angrily and answered him with harsh eyes:

"You was—you were a famous man, and rich. You were my only chance to get out of Catusville. I had a right to my chance at life and I took it. You ought to understand. When you were in politics you could only win by dragging down the other fella. Well, that's how I won. If it hadn't been for you, I'd have

still be sloshin' in the suds at Catusville and callin' the pigs to their swill."

He looked about him dolefully. He cast his eyes down at her dainty fingers whose very nails were jewels. He looked up along her silken arm to her rosy face, her well-limned lips, her lustrous eyes in their heavily-leaded fringes.

He laughed sheepishly. He could afford a cynicism now that he was no longer the leader of a high-minded citizenry:

"It seems to me that I have done pretty well by you."

"You cert'n'y have," laughed Arlette.

"But I've had the name without the game," he sighed.

She took his hand in her two soft palms and murmured:

"You cert'n'y have. But—say listen, dear, have you got a date for dinner tonight?"

"No, but I've got the price."

"Price nothin'. You've spent enough on me. I got a swell little apartment, and a cook that can broil a live lobster so he thinks he's still livin'."

"You can do that yourself," said Pomeroy.

And he laughed till the tears poured down his cheeks.

The tears poured down Arlette's cheeks, too, as she stared at the man to whom she owed all she was. It was not much, but it was what she wanted to be. She had known fame of a sort. She had money. She could afford what had once been far out of her reach. She could afford to be generous.

Chicken-feed

They found a French war-cross pinned to his undershirt.

The overwrought surgeons had given him up as past mending and turned to the rest of the increasing host. A wounded actor, lying out in the rain, said to the stranger in the next stretcher:

"This battle looks like a big hit. Pipe the line in front of the box-office."

The surgeon-major, who had used up enough sympathy in one day to bankrupt a Sister of Charity for ten years, thought of the uncomplaining wretches outside and of his first duty, which was to repair men as far as possible for restoration to the hell of the firing-line or the purgatory of service in the rear. He turned away from the latest tattered remnant and said to the nurse,

"No use wasting time on him."

The nurse, who had been famous for her gorgeous costumes at great receptions, was a

gruesome sight now, but she had not quite lost the power to suffer. She hoped the poor thing before her had not heard what the major said.

As she made ready to remove him, she looked for some mark of identification. His wrist-tag—the British soldiers called it a "meat-ticket"—had gone with the wrist that wore it.

Then it was that she found his war-cross where he had hidden it. The meekness of him broke her heart anew. Her chin crumpled with grief, and she plucked the surgeon by the sleeve.

"Look, Major!"

The surgeon, who would have swapped an arm for a cross, understood.

"He didn't get that for nothing. He won it, and then went back in again. Let's give him a once-over."

His pride was touched now, and he took up the obliterated thing that had once been human as if it were a gauntlet thrown down by his arch-enemy. His swift search disclosed not only the many wounds of the latest encounter with a shell but the autographs of other surgeons who had stitched him together before.

He felt a kind of awe before the indomitable soul that occupied such a frame, and he resolved to prevent its eviction.

The actor outside, pretending not to be impatient, said:

"That must be a great movie they're running off in there. Looks like the audience inside was going to stick it out all night."

Major Hathaway finally got his man laced up firmly enough for the trip back to the base hospital; and then, in the course of time, he grew well enough to be delirious and strong enough to try to get out of bed.

When his new nurse, Miss Copley, restrained him, he startled the quiet ward by protesting in a loud voice:

"Lea' me loose! I gotta go kiss de chickens good-night."

Miss Copley was prepared for almost anything from her delirious patients, but this stunned her. The other guests were ready to laugh at almost anything, and this remark had great success. It would be an impertinence to suggest that the word "chicken" meant with them what it meant to the ancient Roman poets—a pretty girl, a skirt.

But there was more to come. After a lapse

of silence, the anonymous babbler suddenly began to blubber:

"When I kissed dat old rooster, he bit me."

An audience that is puzzled rarely laughs. This last line caused no merriment. The bewildered ward buzzed with debate as to its meaning.

It had long been notorious that one of the chief horrors of war in France was the danger a hero ran of being discovered by the French in some act of valor and not only called out before a whole army but publicly kissed on both cheeks by some bristly old general.

Perhaps this lad had tried to conceal his war-cross, since it amounted to an admission that he had submitted to male osculation. Yet his latest utterance would seem to imply that he had given as well as accepted the salute on the cheek. This was baffling.

To have been kissed by a French general was not unheard of, but to have kissed a French general was certainly the most astounding feat of the war. No wonder the old rooster bit him.

This was the only theory the ward could construct, and it was accepted as the merest temporary substitute for an explanation. Everybody waited eagerly for another instalment of

the serial delirium. One or two pain-weary wretches who had planned to die away from their ordeals were kept alive by their curiosity. The nurse told the doctor, and he told the head surgeon, who decided that the boy's brain was affected. He ordered his skull attended to, and a silver plate was let in to replace a vanished section of the roof.

At the same time, an American sculptress worked over the distorted features and gave the hero back his face. This remodeling was carried out in yet a third hospital, and the ward he had left never learned the answer to the puzzle; but for many days after his departure, its silence was broken by some one chuckling,

" 'When I kissed dat old rooster, he bit me.' "

The story did not follow the soldier to his new hospital, and when he came out of his fog, he had forgotten the emotions that inspired the outburst.

He was able now to give himself a name. It had an impossible sound at first, and Miss Moulton, his nurse, could make nothing out of it but "Oinie Cherse, Hunnernan Sickty-fit N'Yawk." He had no hand to write it with,

and he was fretful about her stupidity when she tried to spell it.

At length, Miss Moulton noted that he called her "noiss" for "nurse." Therefore she judged that "Oinie" might be "Ernie." This sounded reasonable, especially as he called the Germans "Choimans." This placed him on the lower East Side of New York. But what could "Cherse" be?

Knowing that cockneys drop the "h" where it belongs and tag it on where it does not and that the Honoluluans know no difference between "l" and "r," Miss Moulton, by a brilliant feat of reasoning, figured that "Cherse" might be "Joyce." She printed the words: "Ernest Joyce, 165th N. Y." on a card and showed it to him, and he was so glad to be reunited to his name that big tears rolled down into his grin like small pool-balls slipping into a pocket. It must be a terrible thing to be separated from one's identity.

The nurse confirmed her guesswork by reference to the roster of the Hundred and Sixty-fifth; and, by looking up the citations, she found that Ernest Joyce had indeed been awarded the *Croix de Guerre.*

He had been one of a machine-gun crew fight-

ing a duel with a German nest. All of his companions having been crippled or killed, he fought his gun alone till it jammed. Whereupon, in an ungovernable burst of temper, he had seized a spade, visited the German emplacement, bashed off the helmets and bashed in the skulls of the gang. Then he had turned the German gun round and was trying to fire it at the enemy when the line reached him. It was a fairly neat job for a draftie.

He blushed when the nurse accused him of it, and by virtue of that strange obstinacy which makes people go out of their way to avoid correct pronunciations of foreign words, he persisted in calling his *"Kwa de Gair"* a *"Crocks dee Gwa."* His nurse could not persuade him to tell her the vivid details of the achievement so briefly recorded in the citation.

He seemed not to be interested in anything but his meals, his cigarettes, and his comfort. He asked the nurse to write one letter to "me mudder" and tell her he was not hoited bad and would come home and bring her his *Crocks dee Gwa.* He asked that a duplicate of this letter be sent to the young woman whose address was on a photograph in his kit-bag.

When the nurse pointed out that he could hardly take home one war-cross to each of them, he yawned, "I should worry."

He showed no further impatience as to his future, and made no complaint at all of the pitiful depletion of his members. When he learned that he was not to go back into the battle-line again, he grinned sarcastically and growled:

"De Choimans got all of me dat's comin' to 'em."

Joyce's body mended eagerly. He fattened visibly, and accounted it a luxury, not a shame, that tired women bathed and shaved him, changed his bandages, brushed what hair he had, and his teeth, blew his nose for him, fed him his meals, and assisted in all the functions of body and mind.

The only time he expressed a regret at his lack of implements to face life with was when his nurse hurried to him with the wonderful news that his own commander had recommended him for an American decoration because of his second achievement.

"Think of it—two crosses!" cried Miss Moulton. "A French one and an American one! Now you can take one home to your

mother, and one to that pretty Miss Gropper, as you promised. It's miraculous!"

"Ah, ferget it!" he grumbled. "I'd swap de bot' of dem for one mit. I'm nuttin' now but a handful of loose change. Chicken-feed, dat's me—chicken-feed!"

Miss Moulton was encouraged by this first sign of a wholesome discontent. She asked,

"And what do you want with one hand?"

"Ah, I could scratch me head and I could shoot craps. I used to be some guy wid de bones. O Gawd, ain't I never goin' to roll 'em no more?"

Seeing such an ecstasy of regret for such a contemptible loss, Miss Moulton sighed to the profundity of her being. She had seen no more pitiful victim of carnage.

The shell that wrenched away so much of his machinery had shattered his soul more cruelly. This immortal being that had written epics of valor, distinguished even among the myriads of heroisms, wanted a hand to play dice with!

Miss Moulton could not leave such an Icarus in such a bog. She was emboldened at times to fasten wings on him again and tempt him to another flight. But the wax would not stick.

She dangled gold before him, fame with wealth, high honors. She appealed to every instinct between pride and greed. She dangled thistles before him, but he would not budge.

"Ah, ferget it!" he answered. "It's up to Uncle Sam to take care of me from now on. He drafted me into dis mess, and he'll have to draft me out. I didn't volunteer to come in, and I ain't goin' to volunteer out. I was havin' a good time in little old N'Yawk, and de Exemption Board grabbed me off me job and t'run me in de army. And now see what dey done to me. Dey didn't do a t'ing to me. And now yous are tryin' to welsh on me, t'row me out again. No, ma'am; I got nuttin' to woik wit' or play wit'. All I got is a face to eat wit' and smoke wit' and I'm goin' to lay here and let me little old war-risk insurance take care of me."

"But your mother?" pleaded Miss Moulton.

"Ah, me mudder's got her allotment, ain't she? I'm cut up so grand dey's a nice piece of money comin' to her. She should worry."

He baffled her, derided her with his abject negations.

She could not lift his fallen soul even to an enthusiasm for his country, for the ideals he

had battled for, for his fellow sufferers, for anybody, for anything.

If some other wretch in torment relaxed the lockjaw of Stoicism long enough to let one cry of agony escape his teeth, Joyce growled,

"Wat's bitin' dat guy?"

If she told him, he sniffed.

"I had dat and woisse, and nobody never hoid a yip out of me. Some dese guys ain't got no guts for nuttin'."

Joyce had plenty of what he mentioned for passive endurance, but he was absolutely devoid of initiative.

Only once he gave praise to another, and that was when Miss Moulton told him one day:

"There's another man in your regiment that got both crosses."

"Yeh?"

"The chaplain."

"Not Fadder Duffy?" She nodded. His eyes glistened. He talked freely for the first time. "Dere's a guy desoives de wery best dey is! Slip him a gold *Crocks dee Gwa* a foot high and it ain't too much. Me and him was pals. We went troo hell togedder. He hoid me confessin' when de machine guns was playin' on us like de Fire Department."

Miss Moulton was surprised at the religious note.

"Are you a Catholic?"

"Me? Nah; I ain't nuttin'. But I was a Cat'lic for a few minutes all right, and I'd go troo berling erl for Fadder Duffy. Dere's a guy ain't got enough yeller in him to make a yolk for a hummin'-boid's egg."

"Did you know him well?"

"I'll say I did! Not long, but mighty damn well. You see de Hunnernan Sickty-fit was one dem volunteer National Guard regiments, de old Sickty-nint'. Many's de Saint Pattarick's Day I seen 'em parade. But I'm a draftie. But by de time I'm in France, dat old regiment's been shot to hell-and-gone so many times it's all plugged up wit' replacement men.

"When I come out de horsepital de last time, see; dey sent me up to fill a hole in de Hunnernan Sickty-fit. Dey tell me me name's Irish, anyway, so I git by, but I gotta go some to keep up wit' dem harps.

"Well, I'm holdin' up me end all right. I used to be a gang-fighter in N'Yawk, and moppin' up trenches is so much like cleanin' out dance-halls, I'm doin' pretty good. De

A First National Picture. *The Patent Leather Kid.*

CAUGHT IN A CROSS FIRE AND FORCED TO TAKE REFUGE IN A SHELL HOLE.

Jerries was savin' all me mail up for one special delivery.

"Well, on my day, me boit'-day you might call it, I'm one of de guys picked out to dewelop a Choiman position. Do you git me when I say 'dewelop?' "

Miss Moulton was so confused with joy at the discovery that he could do something beside sneer and snore that she answered idiotically,

" 'Develop'—is it anything to do with photography?"

"I'll say it is. It's full of snap-shots, and I'm de guy gets snap-shot. You see, our line's goin' ahead like one of dem long waves dat comes in at old Coney Island. But our section bumps into a neck of woods, and dat holds us up, makin' a big bulge de wrong way.

"Dem woods is fav'rytes of de Fritzies, and our major don't want to push us up into no bunch of machine-gun nests. So he halts us till he can find out just how full of Fritzies it is, or has dey beat it wit' de rest.

"And I'm one de guys he lights on to make up de dewelopin' party. 'Dewelop' is a French word for git shot at. So us guys marches out like a bunch of coons dat sticks deir beans troo

a canvas at Coney—— You know, you git a bum cigar for every time you bounce a baseball off dem lumps of coal.

"Well, if dem Fritzies got a cigar for every hit dey scored off us, dey'll have smokes for a lifetime. One time, me old man moved out to de Bronnix and we had a house wit' a yard and grass and a hose, and I used to squoit de hose on de yard and grass and any guy goin' past.

"Well, dat's what de Fritzies done to us. Dey waited until we got way out in front of our line; den dey let us have it good and plenty. Dey was t'oiteen of us went out, and we deweloped 'em all right. And dey deweloped us. In t'ree minutes, we was all down.

"I'm wise to one t'ing: Our major ain't goin' to adwance till de rest of de line has flanked dem woods and taken 'em in revoise, as de sayin' is. I try to crawl back to de line, but I can't make it. And I'm layin' dere wit' a toist on me like me tongue was a piece of sandpaper. And I'm spillin' blood like somebody toined on a couple of faucets.

"Den, foist t'ing I know, a big guy is crawlin' alongside of me and puttin' a canteen

in me face. Gawd, I sucked dat like I was a brat in me mudder's lap!

"Den I remembers me manners and I says, 'I hadn't ought to hog it all up; give some dem guys some.' But de big guy says, kind of solemn, "Take all you want; dey don't want none.' When I quit guzzlin', he says, 'Can you make de line wit' me?' And I says: 'I could, on'y for me insides spillin' out. I tried it, and dey ketch on de rocks.'

" 'You're a stretcher-case, eh?' says he. 'Well, I'll call for one.'

" 'Nah, you don't,' says I. 'Dem Fritzies loves stretcher-bearers.' You see, a prisoner I took once—he'd been a waiter in N'Yawk, and he told me dey used to shoot a patrol in de legs so de stretcher-bearers would come for him. Den dey'd get t'ree instead of one. So I says, 'Leave me lay and crawl home and just as much obliged.' But he says, 'Me boy, I gotta get you to de dressin'-station right off quick. Put your arm round me neck and I'll carry you in.'

"I told him to mind his own business, but he bunched me up, and puts his arm round me and begins to get up like a horse. Seem's like he's a mile high.

"Me legs is all right, and I got one hand free to hold me stummick togedder. Everyting's nice and comfortable only fer de Fritzies. Bullets is spatterin' round like puffed rice out of a skillet, and one or two of 'em nips me, but de big guy—I guess dey bounce offen him.

"He says: 'Me boy, you're hoited pretty bad in de body. How's your soul feelin'?' 'Like hell,' I says, not knowin' who he was. 'I'm afraid so,' he says, and asts me a question or two, and I don't know de answer, so he says, 'You ain't no Cat'lic, I take it,' and I says, 'I ain't nuttin' but a piece of raw meat,' and he says, 'I'm Fadder Duffy,' and I says: 'Is dat so? I'm proud to meet you.' And he says: 'Cat'lic boys like to confess at times like dis, and sometimes boys dat ain't Cat'lics, and are as close to de next woild as what we are, likes to tell me any messitches or git anyt'ing off deir chests dat's boderin' 'em. Maybe you got sumpin' to slip to me while de slippin's good.'

"Dem ain't his exact woids, you see, but you get me, don't you?"

"I get you," Miss Moulton whispered.

" 'Well,' I says, 'give me love to me poor old mudder, of course, and tell her I done what I

was told like she told me to. Den dey's a goil I been runnin' wit' kind of steady.'

" 'I'll write a long letter to your mudder and one to your goil all right,' says Fadder Duffy, and I says: 'Me mudder's name is on de list of nearest-to-be-notified. Me goil's name is Cat'rin Gropper, and her address is in me kit-bag. But you was goin' to tell me about dat confession idea,' I says.

"And he tells me, and I says, 'Sumpin' like what I used to tell me mudder when I was in wrong everywheres, and it useter make me feel lighter somehow?' And he says, 'Yes, my son; de Choich is de greatest mudder of all, and if you'll only believe and repent, all t'ings will be forgaven you.'

"Well, I guess dey's few guys done doitier woik dan what I done, and nobody knew de half of 'em, dearie, as de sayin' is. I had a powerful yen to spread 'em out in de air. Me heart was like an old sore, full of matter, and I busted it wide open. Gawd, but it felt better! I expected him to trow me down and say, 'I can't serl me hands on such muck as you!' But he didn't—not him!

"We stummled along for a t'ousand miles, seemed like. Sometimes, when we come acrost

a shell-hole, we'd hide in it a while till I could git me breat' and Fadder Duffy could tighten up me foist-aid banditches.

"I begged him not to waste himself on such as me, but he said, 'Me son, I'm goin' to save you if I gotta to go up to heaven wit' you.' He sure went troo hell wit' me. He'd lift me up, and start off again, me confessin', bullets whistlin' and spittin', and shells hootin'. I soitan'y spilled an earful of rotten livin' on poor Fadder Duffy. But he didn't mind.

By the time we reached de foist-line trench, I hadn't much blood in me, nor much more to say. And now dey ain't much danger of me doin' any more doity woik. I'm goin' to lay still and be good till I'm called for.

"Well, we're at de dressin'-station and de soigens begins on me. Dey's a lot of guys dere hollerin' for a chaplain, and de Fritzies has got de range poifect. Fadder Duffy goes round amongst de guys and kneels down and says woids in a foreign langwich and makes signs; and some of 'em passes out peaceful.

"Den Fadder Duffy starts back for de firin'-line. And a good t'ing too, for he ain't been went more dan a minute when—zowie!—de end of de woild is come. A big shell lands right on

top of de bunch, and I t'ought I was dead for true. It was den I lose de top of me conk and a lot more foiniture.

"But I'm talkin' about Fadder Duffy, not me. And all I gotta say is, if dat big guy gits all de medals he's oined, he'll look like de window of a jewelery store. Gimme a glass o' worter, please."

Encouraged by this proof that Joyce's soul had not been altogether blasted out of his body, Miss Moulton redoubled her efforts to interest him in life, but he reverted to the lethargy of a basking crocodile, and she could not quicken him with any bribe.

She was called away to other sufferers pouring from the front, human splinters from the battering-ram that was pounding the Argonne Forest down and smashing the hinge of the German gate to ruin. And Joyce was sent further to the rear to make room for newer victims. He was sent back and back, a mere parcel of infirmities. At length he was dumped aboard a ship and dumped off at a dock and deposited in a hospital in New York, a hospital that had once been a huge department store.

Now it was a warehouse for remnants, dam-

aged goods, frayed war-worn fabrics whose colors had run.

And here the government made another effort to debarrass itself of him. The pension scandal of the Civil War had flourished for half a century and a new policy was on trial. The old way had been to offer a disabled soldier a pittance for his helplessness. If he outgrew or overcame his injuries, he lost his pension.

A premium was thus set on indolence, and a republic, trying not to be ungrateful, had kept up a standing army of veteran idlers at an enormous cost that increased incessantly with no benefit to anybody.

The new policy was to encourage self-respect and build up a Grand Army of contented toilers. The war-risk insurance was to be paid according to the severity of the handicap, without regard to the money a soldier might earn by his energy. And an education was proffered him free to help him better himself beyond what he was before the war or what he could have hoped to be before the war.

A more perfect combination of good charity, public gratitude, and good business was surely never made, though the angelic scheme

was given the mouth-choking title of "Federal Board for Vocational Education." There were, as always, obstacles. It was, at first, hard for the Federal Board to get to the soldiers past the barriers set up by the War Department, jealous of its men and its privileges. But Doctor Prosser kept pushing.

When, at last, this barrier fell, it was not easy to get to the men themselves past the various barriers their characters, their injuries, their histories set up.

Ernest Joyce put up as many as any of them. When the agents of the Federal Board approached him to talk about his future, they were met by his savage motto:

"Ah, fergit it!"

"Wouldn't you like to improve yourself and earn more than you did before the war?"

"Nah!" said Oinie.

"You don't want to spend the rest of your life doing nothing, do you?"

"Sure I do!"

He was impatient for his artificial arms and legs. It was a luxury to refuse to work, but to be unable to light a cigarette or chuck a clutch of dice was too much of a good thing. It took a cruel while to make him ready for his new

mechanisms. They could not be fitted to the four stumps projecting from his torso until those stumps had shrunk to their permanent dimensions. Art must wait on nature.

Oinie's first visitor was his mother. She wept over him bountifully. She embarrassed him by her grief. It was he that tried to cheer her up instead of the other way round. But then she had suffered so much in perfecting him for life and had turned over to the government so complete a man that the shock of what she got back was too much for her.

He dared not ask her about his girl, and a certain rudimentary tact warned him that his mother was suffering enough without finding his thoughts divided. The next day, Miss Catherine Gropper came to see him. She was made of no more exalted stuff than he, and her dreams of a happy future with him had been shattered by the news of his appalling injuries.

If heroes do not live up to the advertisements, no more do heroines. Poor Miss Gropper lived in a home she hated; she worked at a job she despised. She had counted on marrying eventually a man who would give her a home of her own. Her hateful luck had let her in for a love-affair with Ernie Joyce, and then

he "hadda go and dror one of them unlucky draft-numbers."

She had taken what comfort she could in the sight of him in uniform, but he had been carried off to Europe, leaving her to a miserable existence as neither wife nor widow. Other girls' fellows had come back well and strong, or had died over there, leaving beautiful memories and unfettered *fiancées*.

The situation had driven many another couple to desperation. There had been suicides and tragedies of every sort. Catherine could not be so vile as to turn Ernie down and give him the go-by just only because his luck had went against him. Yet she could not fail to see that the Fates had done her dirt. She had loved Ernie because he was strong, because he beat up the guys that bothered her or tried to infringe on his rights in her. He would have beaten her up, too, in a minute, if he had caught her skidding in her fidelity to him. She had foreseen a tremendous help in that—a strong support against her own temptations.

And now that support was withdrawn. Henceforth she must have an overgrown baby for a husband—a helpless, querulous invalid to be protected and humored and coddled.

Lonely evenings would call her to the streets and to dances and movie shows. But he could not take her; he could only whine if she wanted to leave him, and if the call grew too strong, he could do nothing to compel her to resist it.

Hers was a complex grief, a very complex terror. Her most unworthy fears were based on an honorable ambition to be coerced into living a decent life.

She belonged to the rough-and-ready class of girlhood that says to the exceedingly personal Satan who whispers alluring suggestions:

"Ah, go on! If me mother thought I'd even think of such a thing, she'd have me hair off me head in a minute. Whilst if me old man hoid of it, he'd toin me out into the street for keeps. So on your way, Satan; nothin' doin'!"

Cat'rin was a good girl in her own way, but she was wise enough to be afraid of herself. Even before she saw Ernie, she realized the danger she was in. She decided that she would have to give him up. She could not afford to risk him.

At the sight of his appalling estate, she forgot herself. Her imagination had not prepared her for what he was—or what he was not. She could no more hide the shock of the sight of

him than she could have taken a blow in the face without staggering.

Her heart was riddled with many griefs at once. She dropped into the chair by his bed and cried.

But noble sorrows do not provide their own vocabularies. She kissed him gingerly, and stammered till the nurse walked away. Her bewildered sympathy took the form of cackle.

"O Gawd, ain't it ahful what they done to you over there? Well, who'd 'a' believed you was ever goin' up against anythin' like that? I'll say they hadda right to 'a' gave you a dozen medals besides them two. They ain't much at that, are they? It's ahful—ain't it, Oinie?"

The most ahful thing about it to Cat'rin was that she found herself falling in love with Ernie as never before. She had thought she cared for him when he was the champion of her little world. She had thought she loved him because he excited her and frightened her and because he would be a good provider and keep her a good wife.

But now that he was down and out, she felt as if a great blood-vessel had broken in her breast. There was a pang of agony in her

throat, an ache in her arms to seize and hold him.

She wanted to sacrifice herself for him as he had wasted himself for his country. She wanted to be his companion forever, to bring him little children, and to treat him as the youngest of them. She was hot with jealousy of the nurse and her privileges with this adorable man. She was determined to get her precious hero out of the clutches of that designing woman.

She wanted to tell all this to Ernie; but she could not find the words—she could not find the words. Not knowing how to express all the storm of love in her heart, she suppressed it, and sat in a stupid silence, fidgeting, till the nurse came back and hinted her away.

Poor scatter-brained thing! She was but a pretty, silly pullet, and she had no wings to fly with. She could only flutter and scurry.

When she had gone, Oinie was in the dumps indeed. Yet she had done more for him in her despair than the nurses who had tried to coax him to motives he could not feel. She had, at least, left him in a humor of discontent. The first form of it was black rage at the skirt who had idolized him when he first put the uniform

on, had visited him at camp, and hung at his arm when he came to town, had written letters to him after the transport took him, and had made uncouth love to him, and now wept over him like some old doll that had been thrown into the garbage-can by mistake.

The next Federal Board worker that called on him caught him in his frenzy and was so grossly insulted that he went away in disgust.

Mrs. Joyce was appealed to for help in stimulating her boy to ambition. She promised readily, and was coached in a splendid line of argument. But when she sat again by the side of her fragmentary son, her grief swept her back into doleful reminiscences of happier days. She sobbed:

"Oh, Ernie, and to think that you should have came to this, when it's me that had such hopes of you! Sure it's a hard world, that it is, and nobody gettin' harder luck than me, or as hard —except you, and I'm carryin' your sorrow with my own.

"They told me the army would make a fine man of you, and now look! You're more helplesser than when you were the mite of a baby in my arms. And when you quit out of this, it's me that will have to take care of you like

you was a baby again. Not that I'll not be glad to do everything for you—but, oh, it's a hard answer to all the prayers I've poured out for you!

"And I was having hopes of givin' up the office-scrubbin' business. I've never liked the city since the little taste of the country we had when your poor pa had the grand job in the street-car barns at the end of the line, and we lived so elegant in the Bronnix, with a yard of our own where I could hang out me own wash like a lady.

"And there was the pig we kept and the chickens—oh, Ernie, do you remember them? Sure you ought, for it's you were the queer child. You loved them like it was canary-birds they was.

"I can see you feedin' them now, and they comin' up to you like you was their father. And you so proud. And never would you hurt them. Sure, and could we even so much as kill one for your pa's Sunday dinner? That we could not without such a howl from you as would spoil the day on us."

Ernie was troubled by this turning-up of long-forgotten years, and interested a little, too.

A First National Picture. *The Patent Leather Kid.*

THE FIRST DAY'S ADVANCE LEFT AN AFTERMATH OF CASUALTIES AND WRECKED TANKS.

"'Chickens?'" he mused. "I believe I do rememmer somethin' about me usin' to like chickens."

"To like 'em! It was lovin' them you was. Why usedn't you go out every evenin' after supper and kiss 'em all good-night?"

"Ah, go ahn! Me kiss a chicken?"

"Sure you did!"

"Ah, fergit it! Not on your life, ma."

"Don't lay there makin' your mother out a liar! Don't I remember? Didn't you wake me out of me sleep once, howlin' in the dark, and when I run to you, thinkin' you'd a touch of colic or something, what did you say but, 'Ma—ma, I forgot to kiss the chickens good-night!'

"And there was nothin' to it but you must pile out of bed and down the stairs and out the back yard to the coop, and me holdin' the lamp out the windy to light your way.

"And what did you do then but come cryin' back, fallin' upstairs with your heart broke in you because—I can hear you now, and you cryin' so loud your poor pa woke and come into the room, and he says, 'What the—what's the meanin' of all this?' and you screamin', 'Ma—ma, when I kissed that old rooster, he bit me!'

"Your pa was never a nice one to wake out

of his sleep, but he laughed at that till I thought it was a fit he was havin'. And you with two scratches on your cheek and me so scared at the sight of your blood that I drove your pa from the room and said prayers over you.

"I can see you now, the creature you were in your bare feet and your nightgown. And to think I was so scared for a couple of scratches on your cheek—and now—and now your poor father in his grave this long while, and you better than half of you gone!"

Her wild grief troubled him, and he made a crude effort to console her with promises of the fine life they would have on his insurance money.

He vowed that he would never marry; he would just take care of his mudder, and, when he got his new hands, they would have the grand life, playing cards all day. He would even teach her to roll the bones.

She tried to pretend that she liked the picture. And she left him smiling. It was only when she reached her dismal room in the tenement that she was smitten with remorse at her utter failure to keep the promise she had made to stir her boy to ambition.

She had left him a dream, at least, and a key to an old cellar of memories long neglected. He found them now again, and shook off for the first time the obsession of the last year's horrors that had weighed his poor brain down: a life of march, march, march—loaf, loaf, loaf —fight, fight, fight.

He had frozen his shoes on one long hike through melting snow, and burned straw in them to thaw them, only to have the soles drop out. He had marched barefoot and in rags till he had found a pair of wooden *sabots* and clumped along in those.

He had spent weeks in a worse hell than Dante imagined, marching in full equipment and unable even to reach the spots where the numberless lice drove their tiny poisoned daggers into his crawling flesh.

He had trudged through mud so deep that, at times, he had to have his comrades help lift his legs from the mire. He had slept in slime and felt rats running across his face and nibbling his ears.

He had crouched motionless under fire, debating whether to squirm and scratch, even if it cost his life. He had known the torment of shattered bones and members ripped off, and

the various circles of inferno in the hospitals.

Great wonder that he was alive; small wonder that he was content to be nothing more, that his outraged nerves should resent any more commands!

And now, for the first time, his thoughts were luxurious. He saw himself a little boy with two arms and two legs, with ten toes to wriggle in the mud, and ten wonderful fingers to revel in their numberless talents.

He saw himself feeding chickens. They came to him when he called. He vaguely remembered their colors and a few of their names—the names he had given them, for he had never known their breeds. He could not have told an Orpington from an Andalusian. He recaptured the beauty of their plumage, the flakes of feathered snow, the beetle-green lights on the glossy black hackles, the autumn leaves penciled with gold or silver, the mottled patterns, smart and sporty as gamblers' suits; the proud steppers on their amber toes, the fruit-red combs and wattles, the creamy ear-lobes, the varied personalities, from the conceited young cockerels, always ready for a fight or a boast, to the snobbish old bank presidents; from the nestlings like powder-puffs to the gossipy dowagers.

His ears recalled the comfortable chuckle of the fat hens, and the rooster's crow lifted him like the first bugles of the training-camps.

He felt pleasantly ashamed of the little kid he had been who had kissed a rooster good-night, and yet he could feel anew the soft warmth of those feathers as he sank his little nose into the pillowy down.

He wondered if his allowance would make him rich enough to own a few chickens. He took a sudden distaste for the life of the city that had been all the life he knew except the hideous outdoors of war.

That part of his brain that had once attended to feeding the chickens felt again a longing to be sifting bread-crumbs and corn from his palm, and it moved the ghostly muscles of his departed hand to beckon and caress.

He was basking in this drowsy alternation between memory and hope when the Federal Board disturbed him with another nagging call to a life of toil. The new annoyer was Mr. Bristed, who was saved for the most stubborn cases.

He had counted on Mrs. Joyce's promises to prepare the way for him. Ernie greeted him with as much disrespect as he could convey.

Mr. Bristed began diplomatically by announcing that he was proud to meet the wearer of two crosses of war, but Ernie was sullen again.

"De double cross, dats what dey handed me," he growled.

Mr. Bristed was not discourageable.

"They handed you a little bit of everything, didn't they? Just how many wounds did you get?"

"Twenty-t'ree," said Ernie.

"And you still live! You were evidently saved for some purpose. What do you consider your major wound?"

"I didn't get no major wounds; I didn't even get a corporal's."

Mr. Bristed explained.

Ernie said:

"I ain't playin' no fav'rytes. I got punctured everywhere from my feet up to over de top."

He shook off his overseas cap and bent his head to reveal the silver plate an inch and a half square.

"Dere's me identification-tag. All I need is me name printed on it and a door-bell in me

good ear to look like a office. Den I got t'ree aloomnium ribs on me left side and five on me right. If de boiglars ever loins about me, dey'll melt me down for swag."

Mr. Bristed mingled amusement and sympathy in nice proportion, but it got him no forwarder with Ernie. He gradually disclosed his hand.

"The country thinks nothing is too good for its heroes, and is taking a great interest in your future happiness. What seems to interest you most?"

"T'ree squares a day and smokes."

"I mean—what would you most like to do to occupy your time?"

"Be let alone. Ain't I done enough occupyin' trenches?"

"Quite enough. But you've got a long life ahead of you, and you will soon be very tired of just being tired. Now's the time to make ready for the day when you'll have rested all you can stand. What did you do before you went to war?"

"A little of everyt'ing. I was a newsie, a messencher-boy, a cloik in a junk store, a truck-driver, a motor-man. I was handy wit' de gloves, and I was a comer in an attaletic club,

and I was just goin' in for politics when de war broke."

"You were a motor-man, eh? There's a whole world of electricity open to you."

"Nix on de electrickity."

"There's automobile repairing, inspecting, assembling."

"Can de machinery. I got no noive for nuttin' dat uses tools. I got no tools to use tools wit'."

"Not now, but you will have. Do you like to cook?"

"I like to eat, but I hadda cook me own coffee and bacon in de field and—not no more!"

"You could learn to be a food-inspector, or an inspector of guns, machine guns—rifle parts."

"You're usin' woids I don't never want to hear no more."

"You could be a painter, a pipe-fitter, a shoemaker, a telephone-operator, an upholsterer, a yardmaster."

"All dem t'ings sounds too much like woik."

"Work is what you'll be howling for one of these days, my boy."

"I'm willin' to wait."

"But you'll have acquired habits of loafing and indifference, and it will mean a long setback. All your old comrades will get miles ahead of you in the race."

"I ain't a racin' man—except for watchin' de ponies, and toutin'. Do you loin a guy horse-racin'?"

"That isn't on the list as yet. You've always been a city boy, so you wouldn't be interested in agricultural matters, I suppose."

"Come again."

"You wouldn't care for farming, or forestry, gardening, raising vegetables, corn, horses, chickens, sheep, pigs, ducks——"

"Did you say, 'Chickens?' "

"Yes; I don't suppose they would interest you."

"Who says dey wouldn't? But chickens is pets; chickens ain't a business."

"They're one of the big businesses of the world. The products of the hen aggregate over half a billion dollars a year."

"Ah, go ahn!"

Bristed was a good-enough fisherman to draw the bait away a little.

"Of course, the chicken business is a good deal of a gamble. It's about as safe and sure

as horse-racing or gold-mining, and while some get rich, most go broke."

"I was always willin' to take a chance," growled Ernie. "De longer de better."

"That's why you got those crosses," said Bristed; "but the chicken business takes patience, too."

"'Patience?' You'd ought to 'a' sor me layin' out in No Man's Land pretendin' I was a pile of doit and waitin' for a Choiman sniper to move."

"But the chicken business takes a kindly nature—one that loves them for their own sake."

"Ain't me mudder just tellin' me I used to kiss 'em good-night? Gawd, if it's on'y gamblin' and waitin' and lovin' dat makes a chicken-guy, who's got anyt'ing on me? But who's goin' to loin me about 'em?"

"Oh, the Vocational Board would gladly have you taught as much as anybody knows. It would make a poultry scientist out of you if you would go through with it, teach you all about the breeds, the best layers and the sitters, and non-sitters, the best broilers and roasters, the best exhibition-birds, the ideal poultry-plants, all about buildings, feeders, ex-

ercisers, brooders, all about incubators and marketing secrets—everything."

"But when you loin me all dat collitch stuff, who's goin' to set me up in business?"

"There are funds just waiting for real investment in real men. I know a dozen people who would be proud to buy a chicken-farm for a double-cross man and put up the finest equipment that can be had."

There was a long silence from Ernie. He was as quiet and as white as a pan of dough in which a yeast is working mightily to give it a soul and make it bread. Suddenly he groaned:

"O Gawd, ast me mudder to come and see me quick! Maybe Cat'rine would feel different and, be different, if she had a chancet."

He did not hear what Mr. Bristed said as he hurried away. He did not even see the white walls of the hospital. He saw himself so wonderfully supplemented with man-made hands and feet that he looked from a distance just like what God had made.

About his feet were flocks of chickens, gobbling at the grain he sifted before them; creamy hens, swimming in little floods of chirping down; stately cocks, flirting corn to their fa-

vorite dames. The air was shrill with the challenges of warrior birds and the clatter of hens shouting: "Extra! Extra! I've laid a marvelous egg!"

His mother was on the kitchen steps smiling and rosy, and a young woman was picking her way through the feathered multitude with an apron full of eggs. She was glad and gay, strangely like Miss Gropper, and her proud eyes were like the eyes that Cat'rin had once fastened on him, and the voice was hers as she chuckled in her chicken voice:

"Oh, Oinie, pipe de hen-fruit I been pluckin'. It's a shame to steal 'em off 'em; but dem poor guys dat has to live in little old New Yawk is squawkin' deir heads off for goods from Mr. and Missus Oinie Cherse's poetry-farm."

If you had told Ernie that there was a difference between "poultry" and "poetry," he would probably have growled,

"Ah, fergit it!"

The Oompah Oompah

The Big Smoke they called him; but smoke was not the name for that shiny patent-leather monster. He fairly glistened where he sweat, and he was a hard yet as limber as ebony would be if ebony were flexible.

It took four policeman to smother him that morning and they broke two locusts over his ram-like skull in vain before they managed to handcuff his wrists behind his back, hobble his feet with rope and tie his anklets to his bracelets.

The policemen were panting as hard as he was and their uniforms were more rumpled because they had uniforms to rumple. His costume was a pair of breeches and what was left of a shirt hanging about huge muscles that writhed and sobbed under his reeking skin. He waited quietly while the officers adjusted their raiment for the eyes of the crowd in the street collected by the sight of the patrol-wagon.

They always ordered out the reserves when they went forth to arrest Wesley Sluter. His mother, being a good shouting African Methodist, had named him Wesley. He grew up a good shouter and an evident African, but his Methodism was dubious. At the age of six already he had accompanied his first policeman to the station-house *haud passibus æquis*. By seven he was a confirmed criminal at craps; and from then on, if there were any misdemeanor he had not committed, it was a mere oversight and not a matter of intentional neglect—though, of course, lack of early advantages debarred him from certain of the more exquisite crimes like forgery, stock-jobbing and plagiarism.

Of his first twenty-five years he had spent about twelve in the care of the State, and the result was a living monument to the rottenness of something somewhere. Every time he passed into the custody and tuition of the Government he came out worse than he went in.

And yet there must have been a streak of white in him, for he was as prompt to repentance as to wrath. Nobody could have been politer than he was now to his captors as he surveyed the highly disheveled police-squad

and expressed his regret for the inconvenience he had caused them.

"I'm ve'y sah-y, gemmen," he gasped. "I isn't any hahd feelins' against you-all. Seems like I didn't even know you was heah. I couldn't seem to see nothin' nowhere excep' that cullud lady yonda; I just nachelly had to get my lovin' hands on her inky th'oat. If you gemmen hadda lef' me 'lone one minute I'd 'a' come 'long as dainty as a lamb."

That cullud lady was the highly polished young woman who had kept offering the policemen a flat-iron and urging them to "dint him wit' dis." She had maintained her distance, but now that Wesley was helpless she emitted a warwhoop, seized from her kitchen table a serrated bread-knife and made a rush at him with the frankly expressed desire to slice his heart out and feed it to the hawgs.

One of the policemen met her as she came with a dexterous tap of the locust on her crazy-bone and the bread-knife fell to the floor.

This frustrated assault set Wesley off again and he gave an excellent imitation of a plunging buffalo with policemen clinging like flying streamers about him.

The lady achieved a remarkably neat and

clever backward dive through the window to the fire-escape and slammed the sash down on Wesley's butting moss-covered skull. It was the window, not the skull, that broke. But a jag of glass slashed his scalp with copious red results.

Wesley yielded once more to reason. The policemen, sharing the American fondness for letting negroes run on, paused while Wesley called through the shattered pane.

"Rest easy, Missy. I won't bother you no mo' today. But I'll be around agin as soon as I'm allowed loose."

Estelle—her prison-pen name was Estelle—hooted back:

"As soon as you're allowed loose? Jes' listen at you! Why, man, you ain't never goin' be 'lowed no looser 'n what you is right now. Dem nice ossifers is goin' to strap you in yo' little elec'ric chair and pump dat old juice into you till de sparks comes oozin' out of ev'y po' in yo' black hide!"

She liked the word so well that she repeated it with lingering fondness. "Jes' a-oo-oozin' an' a-oo-oo-oozin'!"

Wesley recognized the poetic thought with a smile.

A First National Picture. *The Patent Leather Kid.*

IN TRYING TO SAVE HIS PAL, CURLY REALIZED HIS FIRST DESIRE TO FIGHT.

"Dat's all right, honey; I don't mind no oozin'. An' ez for sparks, I eats a telegrapht pole for breakfas' ev' mawnin'. But afta they lay me away, I'm goin' to do some mo' oozin'. My ghost is goin' to come oozin' out o' the groun'."

He saw that this also poetic thought registered palpably with Estelle, so he developed it.

"My old ghos' goin' to ha'nt you till you turn ez white as you now is black. You're what's goin' to start runnin' an' you's nevva goin' to stop. What meals you git you's goin' to take as you pass some espress-train and snoops up what they th'ow off the dinin'-cah!"

Negroes love to picture terror, and they have no end of rhetoric for it. Wesley, seeing what success he was having with the shudderer out in the air, went further:

"Res' easy on you' little fiah-escape, honey, whilst you kin fo' nobody ain't patented no ghost-escape and what res' you git after I come oozin', you're goin' to take on de run. You're goin' to use up all de streets in dis yah town and holler for mo'. Evva time de win' goes Woo! you's goin' to go Wow!"

Estelle's repartee to this was exactly noth-

ing. Wesley waited a decent time, then he said.

"Come along, Miss Oozy-oo, its yo' turn to speak."

One of the officers tapped him affectionately and said: "Come along with yourself, now!"

The triumph of silencing Estelle for once was enough for Wesley and he went along with himself and the policemen in perfect docility.

Among all the worst men in the swarthy San Juan Hill district of New York, Wesley was the one worst worst. He was so bad that the crowd in the street was glad to see him go. And none so poor to do him reverence.

Later, when the police-surgeon was doing some necessary cobblery in the thick leather of Wesley's scalp, he said, between stitches:

"Wesley, they tell me you have taken a slight dislike to your little playmate Estelle."

Wesley was still so excited that he felt little pain, but he was garrulous with shock.

"Dislike?" he chuckled. "Nossa, I 'n't took no dislike to that lady. I on'y hope the rats eats her raw and the gabbage wagon ca'ies her off. That's all the dislike I got. I've change

my mine abote hantin' her. I'd git awful tired chasin' that load of sof'-coal."

"What did she do?" said the surgeon, not that he cared at all, but just to make conversation.

"What ain't she do?" said Wesley. "An' I been gooder to that wench than her own mammy been. Ain't she used to go roun' givin' out she's my wife? And did I raise any oggament? Nossa! I's willin' to 'low any lady to say she's my wife 'long as she behave herself. But when ladies wears my name they got to behave theysevs. But Estelle—what she do? Whilst I's up the rivva on my las' visit, she takes up with a lemon-cullud coon and goes right on usin' my name. Do you call that nice, Docta?"

"Very bad form, I should say," said the doctor. "Does the needle hurt?"

"Nossa. That's what I say—ve'y bad fawm. I gits word to Estelle about how I don't like her usin' my name and a yella coon and I asks her kinely drop one or the otha. And she go right on with bofe. Then I sen' word that when I come out she better keep herse'f and her glass of lemonade on the other side the world from where I's at. She sen's me back word dat I

kin have the otha side the world, she'll take thissun. She say she paid my board and lodgin' so long she done bought my name off me. Did you evva year such talk?

"So by'n-by out I come, and I hear she's still livin' wit' my name and her yella boy. I gen'-ally feels right peaceable when I fust comes down from up the rivva, so I sen' her word to kinely move offen my street and take her strip of lemon-peel with her. But did she? Nossa! She sen' back word she like that street an' she can't find my name on no lamp-post sayin' I own it, and she kinely warns me her gemman frien' always has a pocket full of shooters an' a choice asso't-ment of stickers an' he fights like he had three hands.

"I think of that old Sing Sing and I don't want to go right back. An' nen again I don't want to be drove off my own street. I'm mighty much troubled in my mine, but I'm goin' along about my business tryin' not to see Miss Estelle or Mistoo Lemon-drop. Once or twice I can't he'p gittin' a glimp of him. He strut up and down like a tukkey gobbla an' whistle thoo his teef.

"Finally one day I just cain't dodge him, and he come along preenin' hisseff and straightenin'

a big piece of glass in his necktie, and he come along whistlin' thoo his teef, and act like he goin' push me right down a pair of stairs into a ice-an'-wood cella' widout seein' me at all.

"So I says to him ve'y gentle: 'Say, boy, whyn't you take betta' care of yo' health? For all you know I got a lemon-squeeza in my han' and I might up and sqush you dry.'

"He stops and looks at me like he hadn't seen me befo' and couldn't see me now, and he say: 'My! My!' he say, 'such a big stick of lickorish I nevva did see outside a drugsto'.'

"When he stop to talk instead of runnin' I was so supprise' I begin to talk too. 'Fly back to yo' cage, li'l canary,' I says, 'befo' de kitty gits you!'

"And wit dat, he rars back and outs wit' a knife in one hand and a machine-gun in the otha. I says: 'Where's that third han' I hear you got? I'd be please to see it. Ain't you got it with you?'

" 'Stan' back,' he says, 'or you goin' see mo' han's dan you evva did see!'

"I jus' laugh an' make a swipe at him, and he so scared he don't know how many han's he is got. He try to stab me with the gun and shoot me with the knife. Then he gits 'em

goin' and he's shootin' and slashin' so free I's skeered he goin' to hurt some of the neighbas. So I just got to reach down and take that old resolver away from him. Then I got the idea to make him swaller the gun. But he keep makin' passes with that ole knife so I han's him a little tap on de haid wit th' butt o' the gun.

"If he was a real pure nigro he wouldn't 'a' minded any mo' 'n if his mammy nick him wit' a thimble; but he got so much po' white blood in him, his haid must be made of pas'ebode, 'cause when I tap him—splung! he just go blim! He haid hit de sidewalk and take on another crack and I can see he's good and gone for keeps.

"I'm so supprise at dat I start runnin' for a docta. I git runnin' so fas' I run pas' de docta's house and—splung, into a policeman. I knocked dat flattie so flat I was skeered to stop. When I run myseff out I' so far uptown I ain't got de stren'th to come back, so I calls on a frien' and asks him to leave me res' up a while."

The doctor having finished his needlework with difficulty, said: "So you allege self-defense, eh?"

"Se'f-defense? Why, Docta, that's the se'f-defensinest killin' was evva did."

"But how did you come to be discovered in the home of—Estelle, I believe you call her?"

"Estelle! Yah. You'd mention 'Estelle' a long while to her mammy befo' she know who you talkin' abote. Her mammy call her Lizzie. Estelle! She take Estelle like she take my name.

"But you say How come I'm with Estelle? This is how come. Whilst I's hidin' out after killin' her pet she git word to me dat she's right sah'y she take up wit dat hunk of cheese and she ready to recommence bein' my lady-love if I 'low what's pas' to be pas'. She say she got right smart of laundry wuk to do and I could be comfortable as of old. So I come along down to where she lives at, and she treat me nice an' kin', but on'y just long enough to flash a signal to de police dat I's come home. They's a big reward out for me and she 'lows she can use it.

"I chance to be peekin' out the polla winda when I see the hurry-up wagon come into our street very quiet. It back up to ouah do'. And I says to Estelle: 'Honey, did you done

this to me a-puppose?' And she don't even say 'Done what?' She jumps out the room and slams the dinin'-room do'. I busts it down and she jumps to the kitchen, and slams that do'. And I busts that down just as abote eleventy-'leven police comes in a-swarmin'. I suttinly has no luck. If I could just 'a' got that lady good just one minute I wouldn't ask for nothin' else."

"I'm afraid you'll get a good deal else," said the surgeon. "Good-by, and keep as quiet as you can."

"Yassa, thank ya, Docta. I'll keep quiet. I'm right year in the quiet-factory. But I can't he'p wishin'."

The Court appointed an ambitious young lawyer to defend Wesley and take the experience as his fee. And he pleaded so wildly well that the jury was deaf to the District-Attorney's amiable prayer for a verdict of first-degree murder. The jury felt that Wesley had done the State a service in erasing the saffron stain of miscegenation, gave him the benefit of the doubt in the matter of self-defense, and brought in a verdict of coonslaughter. The judge sentenced him to an indeterminate sentence of not

over ten years. Everybody liked Wesley in his halcyon moods.

Estelle regretted the leniency because it left her hunger for vengeance unappeased and because it meant that Wesley might escape almost any day and make a dash in her direction. Yet she was glad to have him alive because then he could not pursue her as a spook. She took the money she earned by delivering him to the police and lived high for a while. She invested in an alleged cure for kinky hair and spent a large sum in search for an effective skin-bleach. The rest was stolen from her by two ungrateful cavaliers. Before long she was again presiding over a washboard and, like Mark Twain's Mother Eve, always talking of the days before she "lost her property."

In the meanwhile—a very long and very mean while—Wesley was doing his bit at Sing Sing. He was making heavy going of it because his sensitive heart suffered agonies of remorse at the thought that he had left Estelle alive to enjoy the wages of treachery. The injustice of it became a fixed idea with him. His health failed slowly. Even his tremendous frame began to rot in the air of the penitentiary.

Silence was broken at peril. Sunlight was

begrudged him in such brief parcels that it served rather as a torment than a medicine. He went from the shop where he worked to the big vile-smelling dining-hall and back to the shop again, and then at night back to the little cranny in the rocks with the hinged bed and its foul bucket for furniture, and for his roommate a consumptive lifer who coughed forever.

Wesley lost his nerve, and the dread of disease ate away his hope. The infamous cell-block with its hive of tortured drones maddened him. Sometimes at night he would join the other wretches in outbursts of ululation that turned the corridors into a jungle of orang-utans. The place was an oven in summer and in winter a wintry grave; a hand brushed along the stone walls swept off sheets of water.

His rankling temper won him various experiences of solitary confinement, too, in a pitch-black pit with the yellow spirit of his dead rival for a lurid companion. He beat the walls and screamed and promised to be good. But how could he be good with what soul he had in the life he lived?

He cursed the Sabbaths most, for then he was locked in his chubby-hole with his dying fellow in misery, from Saturday afternoon to

Monday morning. If a holiday fell on a Monday, they were locked in from Saturday till Tuesday. It was a system that many good people regarded as so perfect that any effort to improve it was denounced as immoral or mawkish.

And now Wesley began to earn the name of Smoke, for he lost his shine. He grew vague.

The pallor of prison gave him the look of a black man sprinkled with ashes. He drooped and sickened and forgot his one reason for existence; he forgot revenge.

And then one day a miracle, a redemption, a coming as of a Messiah to jail. A new warden appeared from somewhere with the strange notion that convicts were human, or at least that their keepers should pretend to be. This tall, sad-eyed man, the rumor spread, had gone into a cell and into a solitary cell to learn what a cell was like to its inmate. And it had taken him not years but only days to learn that punishment as practiced was not good business, good morals or good sense. He saw that too many men went out from prison with broken health; too many killed themselves; too many took the risk of extra sentences and made futile dashes for liberty. It seemed to him a

bad job for the State to seize wrongdoing men, keep them buried alive for a time, and return them to their communities with ruined bodies and souls less qualified for freedom than before. He could not see the wisdom of refusing a prisoner all help of reward and trust for years and then presenting him with full liberty again. This man believed that sunlight would help to cure brains as well as lungs; and that open speech was better than apish dumbness or skulking whispers; and that schools were better than cells.

He believed that his State ought to place itself abreast of other States where prison reform had taken long strides.

He could not decree a new dormitory to replace the slaughter-house, but he could keep the men in the sunlight during the day; and during the evenings give them entertainment in the chapel to keep them from their cells as long as possible. He said that he did not know just what would be right and best. He only knew that what was was wrong all through.

When Wesley found that no guard stood over him in the shop; that he could walk about the yard and bask in the sun; that he could talk in the mess-hall; that after he had eaten

he could stroll and smoke awhile or sit down and loaf like a gentleman; that he could play baseball now and then or yell with the crowd when a home-run rang from the bat; that of evenings he could see moving-pictures spun and hear songs sung and funny stories told; then he wept. The orang-utan wept for happiness and wanted to slobber the hand of his redeemer with kisses. He worked better in the shop. He hated humanity less. He wanted to learn.

The new warden called Wesley by name and not by number, talked to him, listened to his story, and spared him reproach, as if incarceration were reproach enough.

Wesley heard of the honor system. He discovered that good behavior brought rewards. The mule found thistles dangled ahead of him on the right path and none on the wrong. Before, when they had beat and cursed him, he had balked doggedly, preferring death to compliance. But a few thorny thistles could lure him anywhere.

He found that when he was accused his excuses would be heard by a court of his fellow-prisoners. He thought that the Judgment Day had come as his mammy had promised once long ago. He thought that he could hear old

Jordan roll. He could see the "sweet chariot" swing low. His watchword was "Glory hallelujah, O my soul!"

He grew so well that his soul returned to its former self, and longed to get out about its business. When the Warden asked him what he would do when he was free again, he smiled like a charcoal seraphin and said:

"Fust thing I do is go git that lady; and then I walk so straight folks think I is a Affican Meffodis' parson!"

"But if you get that lady, you'll come back here. Do you like this place so well as all that?"

"I like this place mighty well lately, Mistoo Wawden, speakin' comparative; but I like outside mighty better. I gotta git that lady, though."

"If you get that lady you'll go into the little house that leads to the big chair."

"Mebbe so; mebbe so; but I gotta git that lady. The good Lawd don't want me to leave that black smutch on His nice white world."

This was disconcerting and the Warden put aside his plans for sending Wesley's name up to the Board of Parole. His impeccable behavior and his childlike amiability had made

him eligible, but the Warden could hardly unleash him for such a quest.

Again and again the Warden tested Wesley's mental growth. He pleaded with him to forgive and forget, but Wesley said with a helpless stubbornness:

"It ain't right to let no such female cucumber the ground, as the Good Book says. I wish you wouldn't ask me to be good till afta I git that lady."

It is the habit of wicked men and good to make a religion of their most perverse ideals. Their loyalty to evil is unswerving and automatic.

It distressed Wesley to see how he distressed the Warden with his obstinacy, but he could not budge or be budged from his creed.

Speech having been permitted, it was not long before music crept into the penitentiary.

The sound of the mouth-organ was loud in the land. Men could be heard singing in their cells. It added a new horror to prison life, but there were compensations.

A cornetist whose other crime was arson asked for permission to blow his own horn, and was enfranchised.

A second-story worker with a hankering for the clarinet gargled and burbled.

An embezzler who had combined treasons, stratagems and spoils with music kept a saxophone snoring delectably.

Seeing the rapt attention of the convicts when a real tune was played or the cornet sent its yellow cry into the air, the Warden realized the power of music for good. Music before had meant to the inmates only the wheeze of the organ in the chapel, grinding out hymns of an indigestible piety from an outside world. And every man there felt that the outside world was made up of guilty men who were too slick to be caught, hypocrites who were afraid to sin, policemen who drummed up trade, stool-pigeons, and pious demons of cruelty.

The music those men understood was the common language of popular tunes, doleful ballads, mother-songs, sweetheart ditties, stout marches and nimble dances full of ragtime musical slang.

Wesley Sluter had a big ear and a true. He had a darky's gift for melody, harmony, rhythm. But he knew no instrument. His big mouth could not acquire the embouchure of even the trombone which a liberal-minded safe-

A First National Picture. *The Patent Leather Kid.*

THE BLOODIEST STRUGGLE TOOK PLACE IN THE CHURCH YARD.

blower let him try to play. His big fingers had not individuality enough to fret the banjo strings.

The quirks of the French horn, the oboe, and the flute were as far from his abilities as painting miniatures would have been. He could whack a bass-drum as hard as anyone, but there was a waiting line for the bass-drum and at the head of it was a big horse-thief who could swing two sticks at once, criss-cross, trill on the skin and do a wonderful storm effect.

So Wesley found no place to enter the select group that made up the prison band. He could not tootle, twiddle or thump, though his soul, as he said, was just "oozin' with hominy."

The word "oozing" reminded him unpleasantly of Estelle, but he dismissed her as a sour note that did not belong.

Lovers of the good old days and ways made furious comments on the disgraceful faddishness that permitted music to flourish in a prison, but the Warden was more devoted to making his clients healthy of heart and fit for the world outside than to the ancient fallacy of making men good by making them hateful. And there were others of his mind who learned

of the band and the miracles it wrought, and sent gifts of music and of instruments till gradually a large and ambitious factory of tunes was in full swing.

And thus it was that one day a mammoth horn arrived, a huge bass tuba, the behemoth of music. When it was unpacked the Warden laughed. The bandsmen laughed. The waiting list of instrumentless convicts shook their heads.

Wesley's heart went out to it. His hands stroked it. It was a case of love at first sight. He had seen such gigantic bombardons before; had followed for miles the bands that included them.

"Git to me, ma baby!" he shouted. "Come home to yo' pappy. That's the ole oompah-oompah horn; it make the sweetest music they is. That little insterment is got my name wrote all over it, Mistoo Wawden. Cain't yo' see it, where it say 'Wesley Sluter belongs to me'? Please kin I play it? I nachelly gotta git that oompah."

The crowd hooted at his presumption.

"Can you play it?" the Warden asked.

"Sho' I kin play it."

"When did you learn?"

"Oh, I ain't nevva learn. But I know I kin play it."

"Did you ever try?"

"Nossa, but I got a feelin'——"

"Try it."

Wesley gathered it up like a fat child and set his hand on the keys and his fat lips to the cup of the mouthpiece. He smiled blissfully hearing great music coming. He flickered his eyelids and breathed a honey breath. That was all he breathed.

He wet his lips, pursed them and blew louder; the horn did not blow at all. His cheeks bulged like a wind-god's in an almanac and he emitted a gale that ought to have pushed a sloop over; but the silence within the brass corridors of that labyrinth was complete.

The convicts made noise enough with their laughter at his fruitless antics, and Wesley almost brought on a hemorrhage with his next gas-attack.

"That ain't a accordeon," said the amiable horse-thief. "You gotta blow in it yourself."

"It's against the law to use a silencer," said a well-known gunman. "They gimme five years for it."

Wesley contorted his flannel mouth against

the cup and fought the horn as if it were a great snake and he Laocoön.

Penitentiary humor rained on him as the sweat rained off him.

"Watch out, coon, you'll sprain your face!"

"Spit on your hands!"

"Think of suckin' a lemon!"

"Now, lads, all together!"

In his wrath Wesley made a supreme effort and the horn gave out the startled slip-sliding snort of a rogue elephant. The blast nearly knocked a watchman out of his tower.

A nervous lady visitor, who was sorry she came anyway, jumped two feet in the air and shrieked "What's that?"

The raucous cheers of the convicts made her imagine a general escape with the massacre of all concerned. She could not be checked till she was beating against the gate pleading for emittance.

Wesley went on practicing, lost the knack and found it again.

When he surrendered the tuba at length he was weak but victorious.

"I said I could do it!" he bragged, "and I suttingly kin. All I gotta do now is to learn how."

Fortunately he knew no other instrument, and one of the valve-horn players consented to undertake his instruction for the love of art and humanity and for the sake of the band.

It was a long and weary while before Wesley got the scale into his fingers and his face. It was not easy to be accurate where every tone depended on just the right blowing with just the right valve in play, but as Wesley said:

"I got all the time they is."

The penitentiary suffered with him in his apprenticeship. The earache was a universal malady. The only thing that made his mistakes tolerable was the primeval laughter evoked by the mishaps of that slippery thunder.

One of the convicts was a musician of culture, a violoncellist who had carelessly drifted into bigamy; he despised even the best the band could do. He hated brass bands. A string quartet playing a bit of Bach was about the noisiest thing he could tolerate.

He loathed Wesley and his savage tastes and urged him to try to escape. He had the thought that even if Wesley failed he would at least be dismissed from the band.

"What do I do with my little oompah?" he asked. "I cain't tote that in my pants pocket.

Besides, it ain't edzackly mine. What do I do with my oompah?"

"Leave it behind, you poor fool," said the 'cellist.

"Ump-umm!" said Wesley. "Ump-umm and ump-pah! You got foolish notions, Mistoo Man. You may know music but you don't know me."

In the course of time Wesley gained a rough control of the tuba, and he was admitted to the sacred band. At first he trembled with stage fright and broke up several excellent starts. Criticism did not spare him any more than it has spared greater musicians, but his strength and his frantic zeal forbade any one to propose his exclusion, and slowly he gained confidence. He grew boastful. He grew playful, and vain.

When the band marched through the yard he swaggered along as if he were the King of Siam. When the Warden had distinguished visitors the band was sometimes invited to come outside the walls and sit under a big tree and play. No one failed to take note of the huge black man all wrapped up in the huge brass horn and pumping the deepest notes that music knows from that great yellow morning-

glory, while his eyelids beat ecstatically before his shining eyes.

And so in the course of time his time was up, and the State owed him his liberty. The Warden could not keep him longer under restraint, though he had not yet extracted from him a promise not to get that lady.

The effect of the music had been dual. It had softened the brute and it had given him new pride. The unrequited treachery of Estelle was still the indelible stain upon his pride. It must be effaced.

The Warden repeated his old warning of what it meant, but Wesley pleaded:

"The Lawd don't like that wench no mo'n what I do. I ain't sayin' I'm goin' to git her right away, but—well—I ain't sayin'."

"If you promise me on your honor not to harm that girl, I'll make you a present of the tuba," was the Warden's last desperate bribe.

Wesley was torn betwixt love and duty, but his code of honor, such as it was, won the battle with art. He shook his head, and went back into a world that had to take him as it found him, as he had to take it as he found it.

The best the Warden could do was to notify the police to keep an eye on Wesley and to get

warning to Estelle. Then he waited for news.

Complicated results followed the Warden's action. The police could not find Estelle. She had left her old district. She had spent some of her leisure in prison, and had sounded the gulfs of depravity. Then somehow she fell into the arms of the Friendly Shelter maintained with peculiarly beautiful humanity for the rescue of negro girls and women from sin and shame.

Whether Estelle had exhausted the interests of vice and found a new field of emotion in the fold of decency, or whether her previous errors had been merely the disasters of a misguided saint, a metamorphosis was wrought in her, and it seemed to be lasting. Her soul came out of the laundry like new and she longed to keep it clean.

The black Magdalen went about doing good works and hard works, earning her living with toil and helping others out of the gutters of the race and out of the ambiguous hells of the "black-and-tan" dives.

Her one dread was the return of Wesley Sluter. The riddle of her pious thoughts was what she ought to do? He had killed a man and had promised to kill a woman as soon as his

other engagements permitted. She could not appeal to his love for mercy because he hated her, and such messages as came down to her from Sing Sing through occasional visitors brought nothing but confirmation of Wesley's old vow.

To denounce him to the law at once upon his release did not appeal to her new soul. To appeal to the police for protection and to expect it did not appeal to her old experience.

Her wits were in a panic as the time drew near, and when she learned that Wesley was about to come out, she fled incontinently to Chicago without telling any one.

She was not missed except by Wesley, who tried in vain to find both her and a job, at which he could earn enough in time to buy a tuba of his own. But the police keeping him under their eyes kept him from holding any place long. He feared that they would frame him and send him up the river again just to get rid of the bother of watching him.

And so after a miserable drifting about in the backwaters of negro poverty, he resolved to change his luck and his territory. He began to beat his way and work his way to Chicago.

How he got there and how he kept alive when he arrived would make an Afro-American

"Odyssey" hardly worth chronicling. But there he got at last, and after many weeks he caught a glimpse of Estelle and she a glimpse of him. She fled and he pursued. He lost her in the crowd, but his heart quickened with lust for her destruction.

He felt that he owed her not only the old grudge but all the new distresses he had suffered since his return. If it had not been for her he would long ago have been a man of means and a man of art in New York, the owner and master of a full-rigged tuba in a colored gentlemen's band.

By now Wesley had learned the haunts of the lowlier negroes of Chicago and he went after Estelle like a bloodhound. She had caught the look of hate that blazed in his dull eyes when their glances met, and she had been too terrified for anything but a frantic black-rabbit instinct to rush to her old hiding-place.

She was afraid to ask for help from the neighbors she met on the steps of her tenement or from any of the men in the house. She was afraid that she would only bring death upon them as upon the poor yellow fool that she had goaded once before into a defiance of the beast that Wesley became in his ire.

Estelle stumbled up the stairs to her room and forgot to lock the door. She knew that doors meant no protection against Wesley Sluter. She wanted to try her new defense, the shield of prayer.

On her knees she had found help at other times from the fiends of brute desire that constantly tormented and haled her backward to her old life. On her knees she sought protection now.

She flung herself down by her bed and her black arms and hands seemed to wrestle over her kinky poll with its pathetic spikes of twisted and beribboned wool. She was stammering.

"Oh Lawd, don't make me die—unless Thou wants me to. But don't want me to—not yit —not jes' yit, O Lawd Jesus! I been so wicked! I been so bad! I'll—I'll be ready some otha day. But not today. I'm so skeered. I don't want to die all skeered. I don't want to die like he'll kill me. Leave me die in my baid like a nice good girl, and I won't ask nothin' mo'. Don't leave me to be all murdered up and mangled. He hurts so when he hits and chokes. O blessed Lawd, have mussy on my po' body and soul! Gimme time to pack my things and

get out of this town. Don't leave him find me. Don't lead him heah. Don't let the chariot come!"

"Well, missy, heah I is like I said I would be!"

That was the answer to her prayer. She cast her eyes up and saw Wesley inside the door and the door closed back of him, and his terrible hand out toward her. He moved forward.

The woman's prayers and her screams stuck in her big mouth. She rose sidelong to her feet and slid along the wall aghast. And Wesley followed smiling.

She slid like a shadow along the white-washed wall to a closet where she kept coal and kindling and the door being ajar she oozed through and pulled the door shut upon her.

But Wesley wrenched it open with ease and chuckled as he watched her cower and quiver, a black woman in a black hole, all black except her white eyeballs and her white teeth bared in a grimace of fear. The only sound was the flutter of her big lips fluttering like a window-shade in a wind.

Wesley's hand came in and gripped her wrist and yanked her forth and his other hand went

to her throat. She felt it there clenching slowly, slowly severing her head from her heart, squeezing her life in two. Her heart and her head throbbed madly at their disunion. Her longing for air was a mad pain. Her thoughts smothered in her skull. She gave up her life as a thing lost in a whirlwind.

And then the clutch relaxed a little. She caught a gasp of air. The fingers closed again. Yet opened again. She thought that this was his final cruelty, to prolong her agony. But her wild eyes saw upon his gorilla face a battle of some strange sort. He suffered, and his head rocked with the anguish of his conflict.

Abruptly, with a snarl and a yelp of ferocity, he hurled her to the floor. The freedom from his throttling fingers was bliss, but she stared up at him in a daze where he swam in a battle with some invisible opponent. She heard him moaning.

"I cain't do it! I ain't man enough! After all these yeahs I cain't pay her what I owe her! My ole right hand ain't good for nothin' but playin' that oompah. Killin' ain't in the right key. It ain't in toon. I cain't do it!"

He sank down on the edge of the bed and wept in abject shame. Estelle gazed and won-

dered, trying to find strength and courage enough to creep toward the door.

The sobs of the monster caught her by the throat with an ache more strangely painful than the pangs of death. When she could crawl she crawled toward him and set her hand on his and said:

"I'd rather you choked me, Wes, than go on chokin' yo'seff this-a-way. I ain't afraid to die now. I been washed and redeemed and my soul is saved. I wouldn't mind if you did kill me—much—only for the sin it would lay on you!"

Emotions went in storms in Wesley's simple heart.

With a rage of welcome he caught her up to him and smothered her in his arms. And now he was laughing:

"Golly, what molasses you mus' be eatin' to have such sweetness on yo' lips! I reckon you and me is goin' forgit a few things and take up where we lef' off the las' time we was friends. You got a right nice place heah and I'll git a job soon as I rest up a while."

Miss Estelle shook her head and put his hands away with a gentle strength and dignity that amazed him beyond resistance.

"Not me, Mista Sluter. I's got good since I

saw you las'. You kin kill me but you kinnot git me back where we was at. I done lef' off all that sawt of goins-on for good and all. Yassa, for good and all! Futthermo', I don' 'low men folks in my room. So eitha kill me or go along about any otha business you may have."

Wesley was so bewildered, so stunned, at the grand manner of the onyx saint who stood before him, that he permitted her to put him out and close the door in his pop-eyed face.

Wesley did not get that lady as he said he would. But the enemies of the Warden got the Warden; or got his penitentiary away from him at least. But they could never turn civilization back quite to where it had been before him. And they could not take from him the gratitude of the many hyenas he had tamed into men; the thieves and scoundrels he had coaxed to useful citizenship; the law haters and breakers he had transformed to honest laborers and builders of homes.

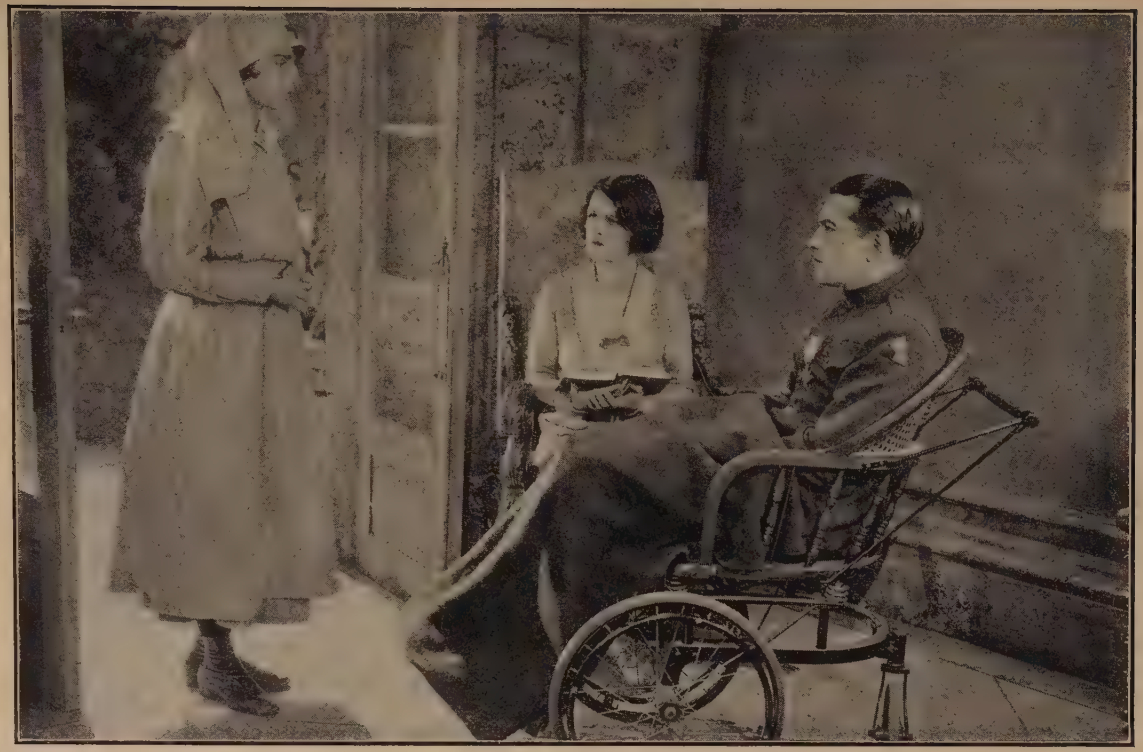
Among the letters he took with him from the laboratory of souls where he had proved the vanity of cruelty and the priceless rewards of helpfulness, was this testimonial to the elixir of life:

Mr. Warden. i take my pen in han to say i am wel hopping thes fu lins wil fin You the sam You tol me to rite You an i am gitin along good i ant done wat i sed i was gone too do to that Lady but not like i promis i wood so i ant comin back there no mo i found the Lady al rite but wen i tride too do wat i sed it dident sem in tun sumhow You no how wen anibodi plays out off tun how it dont soun rite an so it was wen it cam to gitin that Lady an so i brok my word but i rekon You wont be mad at me for that an she is a good gurl now an so we got marit an for a wedin presint she bot me a tuba on instalamen plan an i now has hops of gitin in a brass band of a culurd party wich has not got nobodi to play the umpa an Estelle ses to tel you i play grand and she gone nam the babi after You an wishing You the best of luk Yors truelly Wesley Sluter.

Soon after this the criminal careers of individuals seemed to lose importance, for the crimes of nations occupied the world.

The neighborhood of the world fell into one colossal riot until at last Uncle Sam himself was drawn into the free-for-all. And he called forth all his gang, black as well as white.

One day the Warden was drawn toward Fifth Avenue by the sound of cheers; he hurried to join the curblong crowds. Down the



A First National Picture. *The Patent Leather Kid.*

A NURSE ANNOUNCED THE DECORATION CEREMONY FOR THE NEXT DAY.

historic lane came mounted policemen escorting a regiment. Their horses pranced to the music of the band playing the "Star-Spangled Banner."

There was a heart-shaking sonority to the deep notes, and when the trumpets charged the heights, they did not lack the firm foundation of a great oompah-oompah. And the tread of three thousand men and more followed that oompah-oompah.

It was a black regiment.

The Warden noted the curious amused admiration of the white spectators and the exultant pride of a few negroes. Near him was a big swart woman who smiled and wept and held high one of those irresistible dolls they call pickaninnies. As the band arrived and passed she howled:

"Heah comes yo' pappy, honey. Thass him behind the oompah-horn! Holler goo'-by, at him, honey. Goo'-by, Wesley! Goo'-by, and Gobbless you. Come home safe! Goo'-by; Goo'-by! Wave to yo' pappy, sonny! Goo'-by, Wesley!"

The Warden saw the giant in ebony lugging a brazen engine of music and striding along with the marching harmony. His left hand

hugging the tuba flung out a gesture of farewell. His eyeballs rolled and glistened with tender pride. But his cheeks did not cease to swell and hollow as he boomed forth the titantic oompah-oompah to whose cadence Freedom marched. He had found a soul, a cause, a great voice as if Leviathan sang!

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